the weekly Standard

EPTEMBER 6, 2004

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EUROPE AND THE MULLAHS
LEON DE WINTER

Oh No, You Don't!

Republicans defend the White House

SPECIAL REPUBLICAN CONVENTION ISSUE

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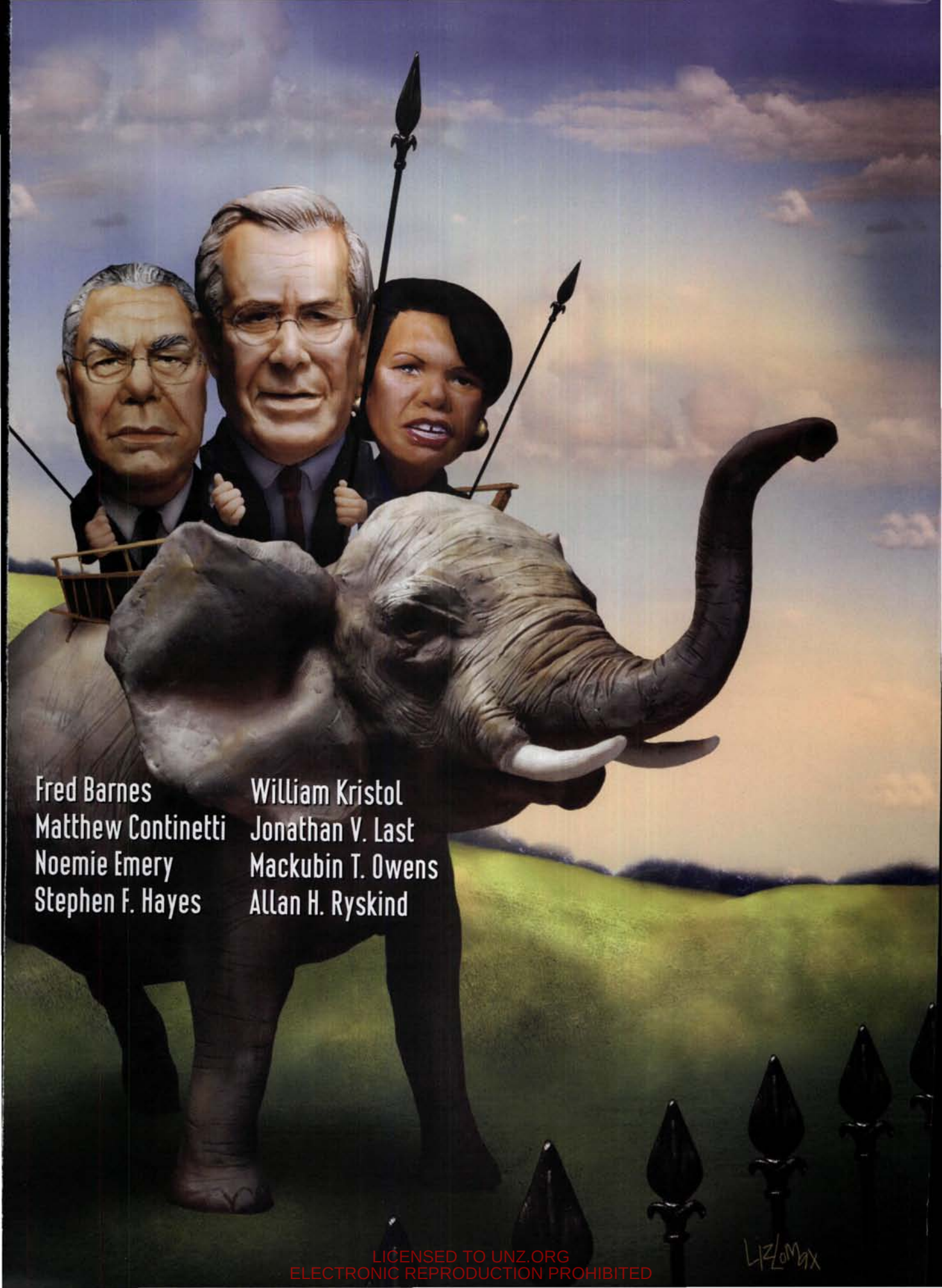

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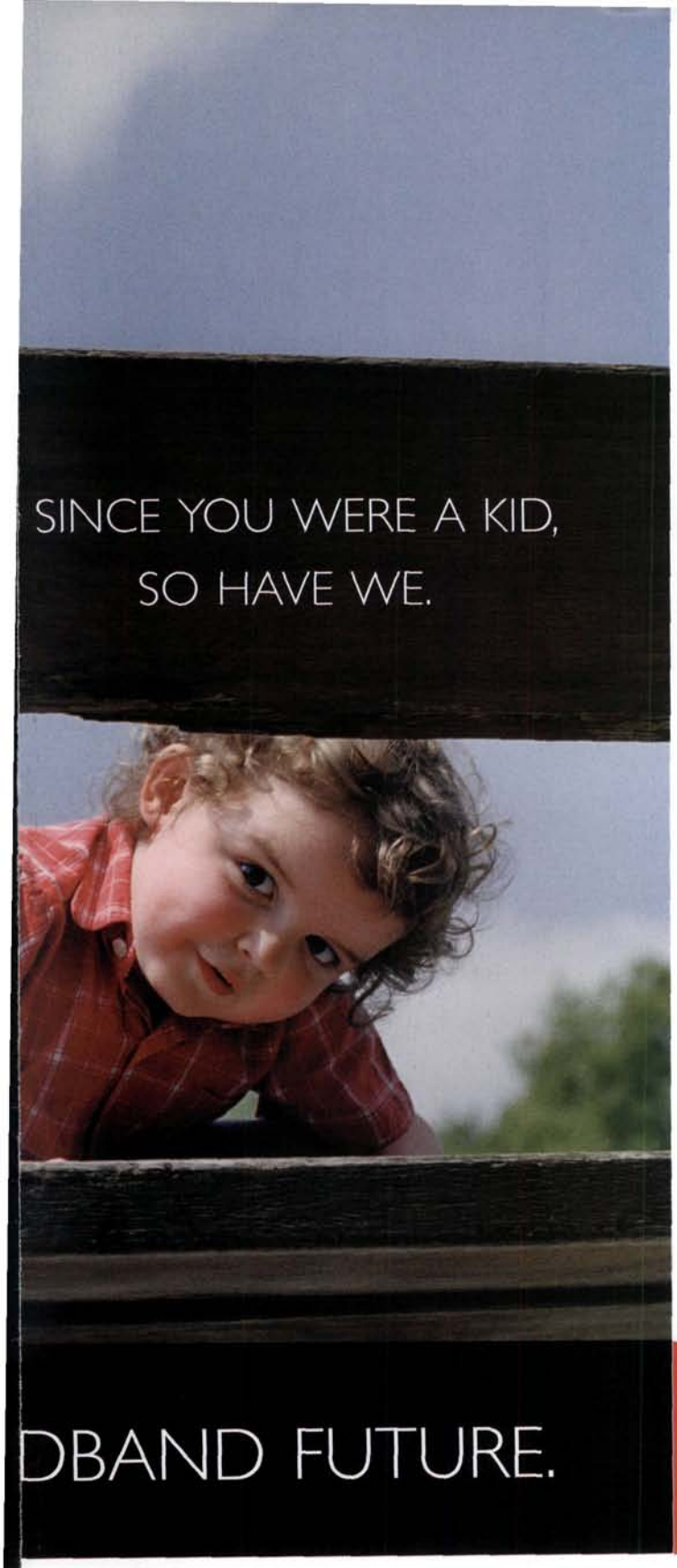

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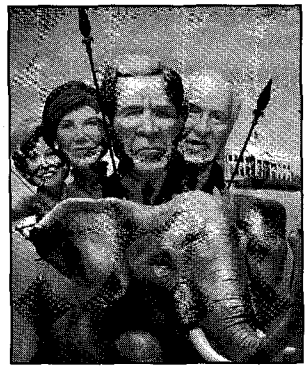

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Douglas Brinkley Reports for Duty

Here's how "presidential historian" Douglas Brinkley figures it: Various factual inaccuracies and contradictions in *Tour of Duty*, his famously sycophantic biography of John Kerry, are frequently cited by opponents of Kerry's presidential campaign. On the other hand, the sycophantic parts of the book are just as frequently cited by Kerry's friends. In other words, both parties find his work useful. And what better proof of his academic objectivity and integrity could there be than that?

So, nah, Brinkley's "not worried" about appearing biased, he tells the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* in a "wide-ranging interview in the soaring lobby of his Uptown home" published August 27. Sure, he says, "I'm sympathetic to Kerry in his 20s." And "it's no secret I think he would make a first-rate president." And, okay, Brinkley's "angry" about "false accusations made against Kerry's military record." Also, Brinkley cohosted a fundraiser for Kerry in February 2003. Plus which, he spoke at a rally for Kerry in New Orleans this past March . . .

But, hell, "I'm not a partisan" or anything, he points out. "I don't have some ax to grind against President Bush. I try to be judicial."

A judicial activist, you might call him.

Item the first: The good professor is happy to help the *New York Times* prepare a front-page August 20 story reporting that the unflattering accounts of John Kerry's Vietnam career being offered by Swift Boat Veterans for Truth are "riddled with inconsistencies." The story's authors find especially useful in this context a previously unpublished interview with Kerry's Vietnam-era commander conducted by "Mr. Kerry's authorized biographer, Douglas Brinkley," and "provided by Mr. Brinkley to the *New York Times*."

Item the second: Two days later, a much more comprehensive and therefore persuasive story on the same subject appears in the *Washington Post*, which concludes that "both sides have withheld information from the public record and provided an incomplete, and sometimes inaccurate, picture of what took place" in Vietnam. The *Post* explicitly fingers Brinkley as a major source of this confusion. Which makes it all the more unfortunate that Brinkley "did not reply to messages left with his office, publisher and cell phone."

Item the third: The day after the *Post* story runs, reporter Michael Dobbs chats with visitors to the paper's website and reveals that "I have not heard back from Prof. Brinkley since I began raising questions about the inconsistencies/factual errors in his book."

Item the fourth: Mere hours later, a smiling Douglas Brinkley shows up on MSNBC's *Hardball*, where he reassures host Chris Matthews that John Kerry "showed courage time and again." And "I find it disgusting that people are discussing whether he earned his first Purple Heart. . . . This is a right-wing August takedown on John Kerry, and rumors, accusations, innuendos [are] flying." Alas, "that's just how gutter politics is played sometimes in America."

Item the fifth: Despite all the gutter politics—a subject Prof. Brinkley is familiar with only by dint of his scholarly research, you understand—some people have behaved beautifully, he reminds MSNBC's Deborah Norville two days later (last Thursday). For instance: "The *New York Times* coverage has been superb." ♦

Also, He's Handsome

Speaking of the *Times*, even THE SCRAPBOOK must admit that sometimes that paper's coverage of politics genuinely is superb.

But then they go and spoil everything by retracting it. Viz. the following correction that the *Times* snuck into last Friday's late final edition:

"An article on July 28 about the ascent of Senator John Edwards of North Carolina compared his political experience incorrectly with that of other candidates for national office in American history. There have been many—not few—with less experience than Mr. Edwards, who is completing his first term in the Senate." ♦

Arachno-terrorism

With a nod of thanks to the always invaluable Middle East Media Research Institute and its team of translators, THE SCRAPBOOK hereby calls your attention to yet another news story the corporate-controlled establishment media proved too timid to report: the one about how an army of giant, hairy, Islamic spiders has descended on Iraq and is currently slaughtering U.S. troops in Falluja and elsewhere. You hadn't heard about that, had you?

Iraqi Sheikh Mahdi Saleh Al-Sumide'i, identified as a participant in the Battle of Falluja, was interviewed by Syrian television on August 23, as follows:

> SUMIDE'I: [W]e believe that Allah protects the believers, and indeed, Allah stood beside Falluja, and I'd like to mention some miracles Allah performed in Falluja. It is possible that the media does not know about them. The first miracle that occurred in Falluja took the form of spiders that appeared in the city—each spider larger than this chair, or about the size of this chair. The American soldiers left, holding the legs of this

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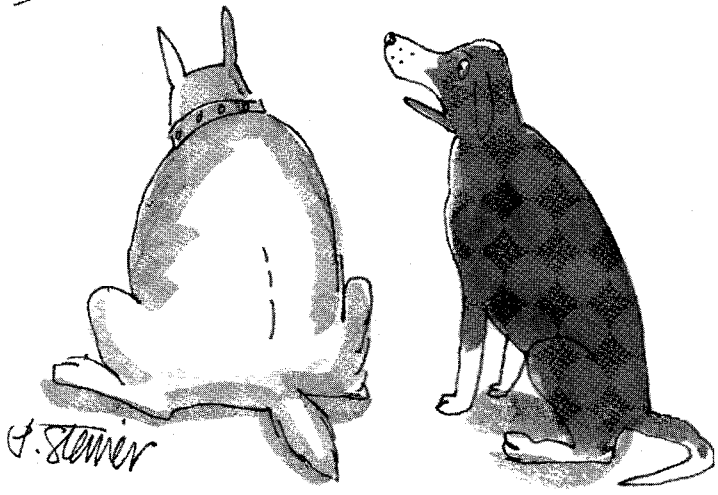

spider, and I too, in one of the Friday sermons, held up a spider, with all its magnitude, in front of the satellite channels and in front of the world. This spider also had thick black hair. If this hair touches the human body, within a short period of time the body becomes black or blue, and then there is an explosion in the blood cells in the human body—and the person dies. This is one of the miracles performed in support of Falluja, and the Jihad that took place in Falluja. . . .

INTERVIEWER: According to your personal knowledge, are the casualties in Iraq of the American forces and their allies much greater than what the U.S. admits?

SUMIDE'I: By Allah, I would like to say something. I swear in the name of Allah on this issue. If the American mothers, sisters, and wives—and this is a message directed at the American people—if they knew what was happening to their children in Iraq, no woman could sleep in her bed at night, and you would see women and children in the streets of America, down on their knees, throwing dirt on their heads because of what is happening to the American forces in Iraq. . . .

INTERVIEWER: Sheik, what do the Americans do with all these casualties? Some say that there are special mass graves for the mercenary forces the Americans brought to Iraq and no one is allowed to photograph them. . . .

SUMIDE'I: This is the truth. We too followed this issue. A mass grave was created in a desert area near the Saudi border for the American soldiers killed. There is also a lake near Al-Sa'diya. The Americans place the casualties inside white or black bags, seal them and toss them from a plane into the lake.

Seymour Hersh will want to get on this right away. ♦

"Frigging" Reuters

Last Thursday a U.S. district court judge in New York ruled unconstitutional last year's Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act, notwithstanding his finding that the surgical procedure at issue is "gruesome, brutal, barbaric, and uncivilized." The Supreme Court, Judge Richard Casey explained, had left him little latitude to decide otherwise.

Whereupon Douglas Johnson, legislative director for the National Right to Life Committee, sent out an email press release highlighting the importance of this fall's presidential election to the future of the Supreme Court and the practice of abortion both.

Whereupon a man named Todd Eastham, who plainly lacks the necessary temperament to serve as North American news editor for the Reuters wire service—but holds that job anyway—emailed Johnson right back, as follows:

"What's your plan for parenting & educating all the unwanted children you people want to bring into the world? Who will pay for policing our streets & maintaining the prisons needed to contain them when you, their parents & the system fail them? Oh, sorry. All that money has been earmarked to pay off the Bush deficit. Give me a frigging break, will you?"

THE SCRAPBOOK recommends that Mr. Eastham quit his current job and become a presidential historian. ♦

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Casual

Khan Woman

A man has been in the news lately, accused of dishonorable behavior in war, and I am here today to defend him. Blood, after all, is thicker than water.

In that famous testimony in 1971, John Kerry likened U.S. conduct in Vietnam to that of Genghis Khan. Now, I won't quibble with the idea that the Great Khan was ruthless. But I insist there was good in him—if nothing else, that he spawned me.

I first learned of my own secret history in fifth grade. I was working industriously on a diorama depicting the myth of the Minotaur. As I was leafing through the "M" index of the family 1988 *Britannica*, an entry caught my eye—"Mangu (Mongol ruler): see Möngke." Flipping eagerly ahead I learned that Mangu was the grandson of Genghis Khan, and ruler of the Mongolian Empire from 1251 to 1258.

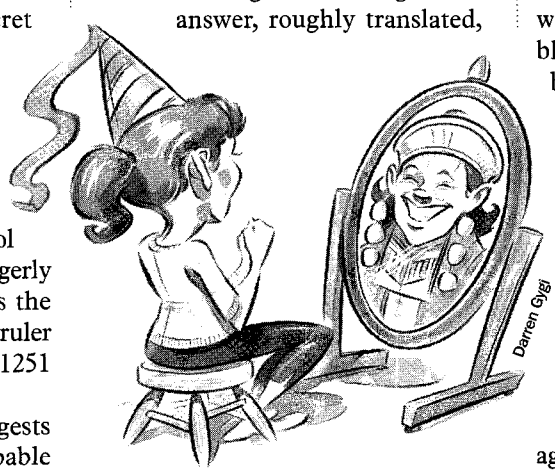
A quick glance at a map suggests that it is not too wildly improbable that the khan or his sons made a sweep through Transylvania, the region from which my family hails, and left a few offspring in his wake. Which can only mean that I, Katherine *Mangu*-Ward, am a Mongol princess.

After intermittently putting on royal airs for years, I recently decided it was time to find out a bit more about my great-great-etc.-grandfather and his ilk. And the more I read, the more I realized that the Great Khan and I have a lot in common. Consider:

* Mangu (or Möngke) Khan was the last ruler to expand the boundaries of Genghis Khan's empire. He held widely diverse peoples together in a single army and commanded them with an iron will. I am also bossy.

* During his reign, Mangu hosted the first interfaith symposium. The rules were similar to those of a traditional Mongol wrestling match, with gulps of large quantities of fermented mare's milk between rounds. The debate ended with the Christian singing, the Muslim chanting, the Buddhist meditating, and everyone staggering out completely wasted. I, too, have been driven to drink by dull, pointless theological discussion.

* When asked "What is best in life?" contemporaneous sources report that Genghis Khan gave the answer, roughly translated,



"To crush your enemies, to see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentations of their women." His response was later immortalized on film by Conan the Barbarian, played by Arnold Schwarzenegger. Arnold is a Republican. I vote Republican.

* Mangu conquered Baghdad, a feat most recently repeated in 2003. No wonder I was such a fervent supporter of the war in Iraq—it's in my blood.

* My habit of throwing highlighter pens at irritating coworkers is surely a manifestation of my roots on the steppes among archers and spear-throwers.

* As the trusty *Britannica* says, "His contemporaries judged him to be a benevolent ruler." As mine do me.

* And the Mongols refer to their queens as "Khatun," which, I can't help but notice, has some echoes in the otherwise distinctly European name Katherine. Coincidence? I think not.

The late, great Douglas Adams touched on what it's like to have Genghis's blood in one's veins in his classic *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.* A character in this book, a midlevel bureaucrat named Mr. L. Prosser, was a "direct male-line descendant of Genghis Khan," but the "only vestiges left in Mr. L. Prosser of his mighty ancestry were a pronounced stoutness about the tum and a predilection for little fur hats." When Prosser was put upon, "his mind seemed to be full of noise, horses, smoke, and the stench of blood. . . . In a high dimension of which we know nothing the mighty Khan bellowed with rage, but Mr. Prosser only trembled slightly and whimpered." My bloodline is clearly more robust.

Perhaps some readers are still skeptical of my genealogical claims. I have two things to say to those doubters: First, you are nitpicky spoilsports; and second, the odds are actually pretty good that I am a Genghis descendant. A recent study found that approximately 8 percent of Asian men alive today share a Y chromosome traceable to Mongolia about a thousand years ago. That's right, it probably started with Genghis Khan. As one article notes, the population of the world in Genghis's time was about one twentieth of what it is today. Therefore, on average, any contemporary of Genghis Khan has 20 descendants alive today. The Y chromosome mega-ancestor has an estimated 16 million descendants, making him 800,000 times more successful than the average man. And that's just the Ys!

As a fifth-grader, I saw life as a princess primarily as a matter of pointy hats and towers from which to be rescued by a dragon-slaying knight. I didn't imagine living in a yurt, drinking fermented milk, and wearing leather pants. But the more I think about it, the more I like the idea of being Khatun Mangu(-Ward).

Katherine Mangu-Ward

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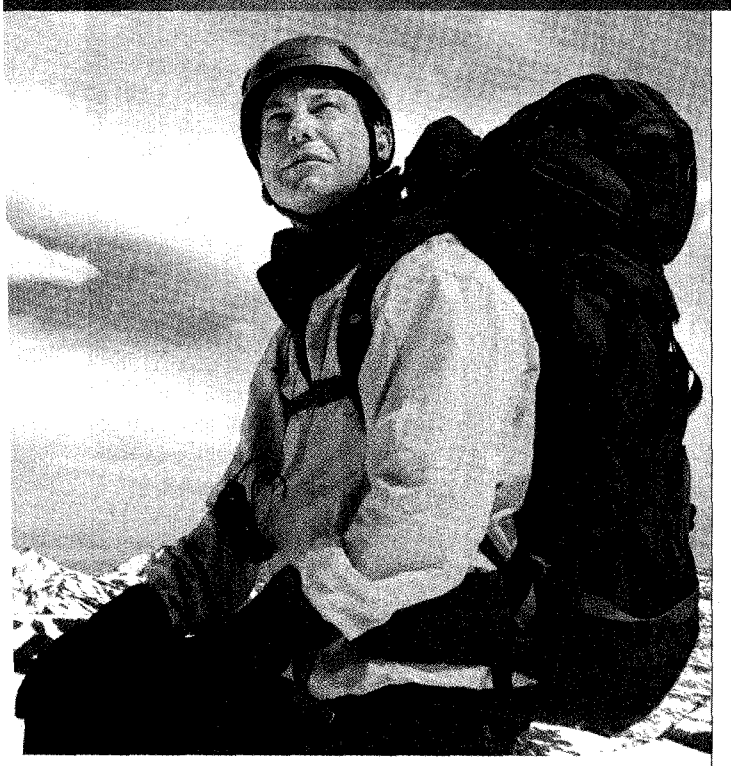

"High blood pressure grounded me and took away the life I loved. Now the only thing climbing high is me." — Phil McKenzie

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Correspondence

Kerry the Hawk

In his editorial "The Antiwar Candidate" (Aug. 16/Aug. 23), William Kristol argues that a John Kerry administration would not implement a forward-looking military strategy. Kristol cites Kerry's Democratic convention speech as evidence. Yet, as with all things Kerry, his discussion of foreign policy at the convention was fraught with ambiguities.

Kerry said he would use military force "only" when the American people or "fundamental American values" faced a threat that was real and imminent. I do not know what a real and imminent threat to "fundamental American values" looks like. Does this include humanitarian crises? Fundamental American values are threatened in many parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America on a daily basis. So if Kerry intended his statement to be some kind of limiting principle governing the use of force, he is far more of a hawk than your editorial suggests.

Frank J. Russo
Richmond, VA

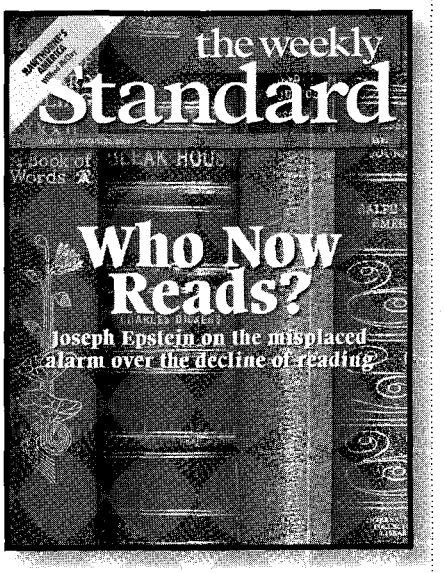
Secondhand News

In his article "Bad Headlines for Bush . . ." (Aug. 16/Aug. 23), Irwin M. Stelzer demonstrates why the economy is perceived as doing poorly when it is actually doing well. He accepts and repeats—without questioning or qualifying—the July report that the "economy created surprisingly few jobs—a mere 32,000." The Kerry campaign trumpeted this as bad news, as did the media. But is it really bad news, or simply biased reporting and misleading analysis?

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) produces two different job counts each month. One is the Establishment Survey that, as the name suggests, is computed by asking employers on the BLS list how many people they have working for them and how many they have hired or laid off. The problem with this survey of nonfarm payrolls is that it doesn't account for new businesses, independent contractors, or the self-employed (except perhaps on a lagging basis). In the short term, it almost completely ignores the entrepreneurial sector of the economy—the sector that creates the most jobs. The other survey, the Household Survey, actually calls people up and asks them (1) if they have a job; (2) how many people in their household are working; and (3) how many have been hired or fired.

The Establishment Survey shows that just 401,000 net new jobs have been created since the recession ended in November 2001, an average of roughly 12,500 per month. But the Household Survey counts more than 3.2 million new net jobs created over that same period, including an astounding 629,000 in July.

The fact is that the jobless rate fell to 5.5 percent in July, the same rate that Bill Clinton hailed as a sign of prosperity in 1996. If the economy is doing poorly and job growth is sluggish, how is it that we have had nearly three straight years of economic expansion at an average 3 percent growth rate?



Daniel John Sobieski
Chicago, IL

Embedded Bureaucrats

Reuel Marc Gerecht made two particularly salient points in his critique of the 9/11 Commission report ("Not Worth a Blue Ribbon," Aug. 16/Aug. 23). First, the commission did not adequately address how U.S. intelligence services could better develop local assets capable of penetrating terrorist cells. Second, its recommended solution to our intelligence gathering woes was further centralization of the process.

The American people deserved more from the 9/11 Commission than an unimaginative call to expand our groupthink-prone intelligence bureaucracy.

Al Winston
Naples, FL

What the HAL?

Victorino Matus may be correct in fearing the rapid advance of technology, but he misstates both the facts and the message of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Casual, Aug. 16/Aug. 23). Contrary to Matus's assertion, HAL does *not* kill all the astronauts. The "Dave" character, in fact, outsmarts HAL by braving the vacuum of space without a helmet to reenter the spacecraft and disable HAL.

Furthermore, a message of the movie is that technology—whether a pig's thighbone or HAL—isn't inherently good or bad, but can be corrupted by the uses to which humans put it. HAL goes psychotic, while his duplicate on Earth does not, because HAL has been instructed to lie to Dave and his colleague about the true purpose of the mission.

Cary William Clew
Hacienda Heights, CA

The Fog of War

As our Shakespeare-literate readers have pointed out, Fluellen's "Kill the poys and the luggage? 'Tis expressly against the law of arms," cited in last week's editorial ("Kerry's Band of Brothers," August 30), refers to the French "war crime" at Agincourt, not the English.

• • •

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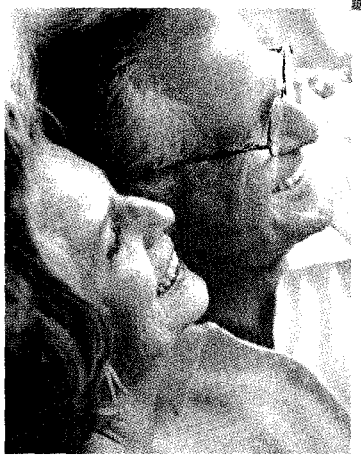

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the weekly Standard

John Kerry, in His Own Words

At the beginning of last week, the online magazine *Salon.com* asked a "roundtable of experts," on the eve of the Republican convention, What can President Bush do to win reelection in November?

I dutifully answered, as follows:

> Bush can run a competent campaign in which he points out the following truths:
>
> a) He is a tax-cutter; Kerry is a tax-hiker.
>
> b) He will fight to preserve traditional marriage; Kerry won't.
>
> c) He is fighting a tough-minded war on terror, taking the fight to the enemy; Kerry would fight a sensitive war on terror, allowing them to take the fight to us.
>
> And then Bush needs simply to sit back and observe as others bring to light the character and import of Kerry's single most famous public statement—his April 22, 1971, testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the alleged war crimes committed daily by Americans in Vietnam.

WEEKLY STANDARD readers are by now surely familiar with items a, b, and c. President Bush will make his case for himself Thursday night in New York. So perhaps it would be helpful simply to reproduce John Kerry's most famous—and perhaps most revealing—public statement, his testimony as a 27-year-old leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on April 22, 1971.

—*William Kristol*

MR. KERRY: Thank you very much, Senator Fulbright, Senator Javits, Senator Symington, Senator Pell. I would like to say for the record, and also for the men behind me who are also wearing the uniforms and their medals, that my sitting here is really symbolic. I am not here as John Kerry. I am here as one member of the group of veterans in this country, and were it possible for all of them to sit at this table they would be here and have the same kind of testimony.

I would simply like to speak in very general terms. I apologize if my statement is general because I received notification yesterday you would hear me and I am afraid because of the injunction I was up most of the night and haven't had a great deal of chance to prepare.

I would like to talk, representing all those veterans, and say that several months ago in Detroit, we had an investigation at which over 150 honorably discharged and many very highly decorated veterans testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia, not isolated incidents but crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command.

It is impossible to describe to you exactly what did happen in Detroit, the emotions in the room, the feelings of the men who were reliving their experiences in Vietnam, but they did. They relived the absolute horror of what this country, in a sense, made them do.

They told the stories at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in a fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravages of war, and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country.

We call this investigation the "Winter Soldier Investigation." The term "Winter Soldier" is a play on words of Thomas Paine in 1776 when he spoke of the Sunshine Patriot and summertime soldiers who deserted at Valley Forge because the going was rough.

We who have come here to Washington have come here because we feel we have to be winter soldiers now. We could come back to this country; we could be quiet; we could hold our silence; we could not tell what went on in Vietnam, but we feel because of what threatens this country, the fact that the crimes threaten it, not reds, and not redcoats but the crimes which we are committing that threaten it, that we have to speak out.

I would like to talk to you a little bit about what the

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result is of the feelings these men carry with them after coming back from Vietnam. The country doesn't know it yet, but it has created a monster, a monster in the form of millions of men who have been taught to deal and to trade in violence, and who are given the chance to die for the biggest nothing in history; men who have returned with a sense of anger and a sense of betrayal which no one has yet grasped.

As a veteran and one who feels this anger, I would like to talk about it. We are angry because we feel we have been used in the worst fashion by the administration of this country.

In 1970 at West Point, Vice President Agnew said "some glamorize the criminal misfits of society while our best men die in Asian rice paddies to preserve the freedom which most of those misfits abuse" and this was used as a rallying point for our effort in Vietnam.

But for us, as boys in Asia, whom the country was supposed to support, his statement is a terrible distortion from which we can only draw a very deep sense of revulsion. Hence the anger of some of the men who are here in Washington today. It is a distortion because we in no way consider ourselves the best men of this country, because those he calls misfits were standing up for us in a way that nobody else in this country dared to, because so many who have died would have returned to this country to join the misfits in their efforts to ask for an immediate withdrawal from South Vietnam, because so many of those best men have returned as quadriplegics and amputees, and they lie forgotten in Veterans' Administration hospitals in this country which fly the flag which so many have chosen as their own personal symbol. And we cannot consider ourselves America's best men when we are ashamed of and hated what we were called on to do in Southeast Asia.

In our opinion, and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam, nothing which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America. And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom, which those misfits supposedly abuse, is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy, and it is that kind of hypocrisy which we feel has torn this country apart.

We are probably much more angry than that and I don't want to go into the foreign policy aspects because I am outclassed here. I know that all of you talk about every possible alternative of getting out of Vietnam. We understand that. We know you have considered the seriousness of the aspects to the utmost level and I am not going to try to dwell on that, but I want to relate to you the feeling that many of the men who have returned to this country express because we are probably angriest about all that we were told about Vietnam and about the mystical war against communism.

We found that not only was it a civil war, an effort by a people who had for years been seeking their liberation from any colonial influence whatsoever, but also we found that the Vietnamese whom we had enthusiastically molded after our own image were hard put to take up the fight against the threat we were supposedly saving them from.

We found most people didn't even know the difference between communism and democracy. They only wanted to work in rice paddies without helicopters strafing them and bombs with napalm burning their villages and tearing their country apart. They wanted everything to do with the war, particularly with this foreign presence of the United States of America, to leave them alone in peace, and they practiced the art of survival by siding with whichever military force was present at a particular time, be it Viet Cong, North Vietnamese, or American.

We found also that all too often American men were dying in those rice paddies for want of support from their allies. We saw firsthand how money from American taxes was used for a corrupt dictatorial regime. We saw that many people in this country had a one-sided idea of who was kept free by our flag, as blacks provided the highest percentage of casualties. We saw Vietnam ravaged equally by American bombs as well as by search and destroy missions, as well as by Viet Cong terrorism, and yet we listened while this country tried to blame all of the havoc on the Viet Cong.

We rationalized destroying villages in order to save them. We saw America lose her sense of morality as she accepted very coolly at My Lai and refused to give up the image of American soldiers who hand out chocolate bars and chewing gum.

We learned the meaning of free-fire zones, shooting anything that moves, and we watched while America placed a cheapness on the lives of Orientals.

We watched the U.S. falsification of body counts, in fact the glorification of body counts. We listened while month after month we were told the back of the enemy was about to break. We fought using weapons against "Oriental human beings," with quotation marks around that. We fought using weapons against those people which I do not believe this country would dream of using were we fighting in the European theater or let us say a non-Third-World-people theater, and so we watched while men charged up hills because a general said that hill has to be taken, and after losing one platoon or two platoons they marched away to leave the hill for reoccupation by the North Vietnamese. We watched pride allow the most unimportant of battles to be blown into extravaganzas, because we couldn't lose, and we couldn't retreat, and because it didn't matter how many American bodies were lost to prove that point. And so there were Hamburger Hills and Khe Sanhs and Hill 881's and Fire Base 6's and so many others.

Now we are told that the men who fought there must watch quietly while American lives are lost so that we can exercise the incredible arrogance of Vietnamizing the Vietnamese. Each day to facilitate the process by which the

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United States washes her hands of Vietnam someone has to give up his life so that the United States doesn't have to admit something that the entire world already knows, so that we can't say that we have made a mistake. Someone has to die so that President Nixon won't be, and these are his words, "the first president to lose a war."

We are asking Americans to think about that because how do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake? But we are trying to do that, and we are doing it with thousands of rationalizations, and if you read carefully the president's last speech to the people of this country, you can see that he says, and says clearly: "But the issue, gentlemen, the issue is communism, and the question is whether or not we will leave that country to the Communists or whether or not we will try to give it hope to be a free people."

But the point is they are not a free people now under us. They are not a free people, and we cannot fight communism all over the world, and I think we should have learned that lesson by now.

But the problem of veterans goes beyond this personal problem, because you think about a poster in this country with a picture of Uncle Sam, and the picture says "I want you." And a young man comes out of high school and says, "That is fine. I am going to serve my country." And he goes to Vietnam and he shoots and he kills and he does his job or maybe he doesn't kill, maybe he just goes and he comes back, and when he gets back to this country he finds that he isn't really wanted, because the largest unemployment figure in the country—it varies depending on who you get it from, the VA Administration 15 percent, various other sources 22 percent. But the largest corps of unemployed in this country are veterans of this war, and of those veterans 33 percent of the unemployed are black. That means 1 out of every 10 of the nation's unemployed is a veteran of Vietnam.

The hospitals across the country won't, or can't meet their demands. It is not a question of not trying. They don't have the appropriations. A man recently died after he had a tracheotomy in California, not because of the operation but because there weren't enough personnel to clean the mucous out of his tube and he suffocated to death.

Another young man just died in a New York VA hospital the other day. A friend of mine was lying in a bed two beds away and tried to help him, but he couldn't. He rang a bell and there was nobody there to service that man and so he died of convulsions.

I understand 57 percent of all those entering the VA hospitals talk about suicide. Some 27 percent have tried, and they try because they come back to this country and they have to face what they did in Vietnam, and then they come back and find the indifference of a country that doesn't really care, that doesn't really care.

Suddenly we are faced with a very sickening situation in this country, because there is no moral indignation and, if there is, it comes from people who are almost exhausted by their past indignations, and I know that many of them are sitting in front of me. The country seems to have lain down and shrugged off something as serious as Laos, just as we calmly shrugged off the loss of 700,000 lives in Pakistan, the so-called greatest disaster of all times.

But we are here as veterans to say we think we are in the midst of the greatest disaster of all times now because they are still dying over there, and not just Americans, Vietnamese, and we are rationalizing leaving that country so that those people can go on killing each other for years to come.

Americans seem to have accepted the idea that the war is winding down, at least for Americans, and they have also allowed the bodies which were once used by a president for statistics to prove that we were winning that war, to be used as evidence against a man who followed orders and who interpreted those orders no differently than hundreds of other men in Vietnam.

We veterans can only look with amazement on the fact that this country has been unable to see there is absolutely no difference between ground troops and a helicopter crew, and yet people have accepted a differentiation fed them by the administration.

No ground troops are in Laos, so it is all right to kill Laotians by remote control. But believe me the helicopter crews fill the same body bags and they wreak the same kind of damage on the Vietnamese and Laotian countryside as anybody else, and the president is talking about allowing that to go on for many years to come. One can only ask if we will really be satisfied only when the troops march into Hanoi.

We are asking here in Washington for some action, action from the Congress of the United States of America which has the power to raise and maintain armies, and which by the Constitution also has the power to declare war.

We have come here, not to the president, because we believe that this body can be responsive to the will of the people, and we believe that the will of the people says that we should be out of Vietnam now.

We are here in Washington also to say that the problem of this war is not just a question of war and diplomacy. It is part and parcel of everything that we are trying as human beings to communicate to people in this country, the question of racism, which is rampant in the military, and so many other questions also, the use of weapons, the hypocrisy in our taking umbrage in the Geneva Conventions and using that as justification for a continuation of this war, when we are more guilty than any other body of violations of those Geneva Conventions, in the use of free-

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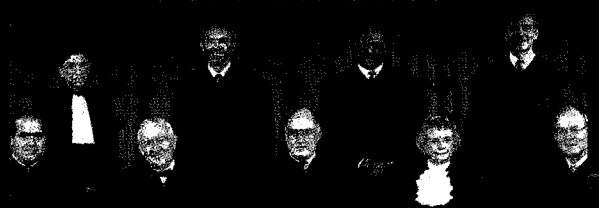

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fire zones, harassment interdiction fire, search and destroy missions, the bombings, the torture of prisoners, the killing of prisoners, accepted policy by many units in South Vietnam. That is what we are trying to say. It is part and parcel of everything.

An American Indian friend of mine who lives in the Indian Nation at Alcatraz put it to me very succinctly. He told me how as a boy on an Indian reservation he had watched television and he used to cheer the cowboys when they came in and shot the Indians, and then suddenly one day he stopped in Vietnam and he said, "My God, I am doing to these people the very same thing that was done to my people." And he stopped. And that is what we are trying to say, that we think this thing has to end.

We are also here to ask, and we are here to ask vehemently, where are the leaders of our country? Where is the leadership? We are here to ask where are McNamara, Rostow, Bundy, Gilpatric, and so many others. Where are they now that we, the men whom they sent off to war, have returned? These are commanders who have deserted their troops, and there is no more serious crime in the law of war. The Army says they never leave their wounded.

The Marines say they never leave even their dead. These men have left all the casualties and retreated behind a pious shield of public rectitude. They have left the real stuff of their reputation bleaching behind them in the sun in this country.

Finally, this administration has done us the ultimate dishonor. They have attempted to disown us and the sacrifice we made for this country. In their blindness and fear they have tried to deny that we are veterans or that we served in Nam. We do not need their testimony. Our own scars and stumps of limbs are witnesses enough for others and for ourselves.

We wish that a merciful God could wipe away our own memories of that service as easily as this administration has wiped their memories of us. But all that they have done and all that they can do by this denial is to make more clear than ever our own determination to undertake one last mission, to search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbarous war, to pacify our own hearts, to conquer the hate and the fear that have driven this country these last 10 years and more, and so when, in 30 years from now, our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm or a face, and small boys ask why, we will be able to say "Vietnam" and not mean a desert, not a filthy obscene memory, but mean instead the place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped it in the turning.

Thank you. ♦

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John McCain Was Right

Kerry should have taken his advice about Vietnam. BY FRED BARNES

JOHN MCCAIN WARNED John Kerry, a fellow Vietnam vet, not to emphasize the Vietnam war in his presidential campaign. No good would come of it. It would only reopen old wounds. Kerry ignored McCain's advice. The Democratic convention made Kerry's Vietnam record the focus of his candidacy. To know the real Kerry, vice presidential running mate John Edwards said, "just ask the men who served with him in Vietnam." Now dozens of ex-Navy men who did serve alongside Kerry, calling themselves Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, have challenged his account of his months in Vietnam. It has ignited a furious debate and distracted Kerry from his campaign plan.

McCain, it turns out, was right. No good has come from Kerry's invoking Vietnam, at least not for Kerry. And as the issue lingers, it gets worse for him.

At first Kerry's Vietnam strategy worked. In Iowa last January, a former Special Forces soldier, Jim Rassmann, whom Kerry had rescued from a river in Vietnam in 1969, showed up unannounced for an emotional reunion two days before the caucuses. Kerry won the caucuses and wrapped up the Democratic nomination six weeks later. In May, when the boat commanders who questioned Kerry's war record held a press conference in Washington, they got scant media coverage. Kerry continued to surround himself at campaign stops with crewmates from his Navy boats in Vietnam. At the convention, nearly every speaker lauded his Vietnam service and mentioned his medals.

No doubt Vietnam made sense as a political tactic. In 20 years as a U.S. senator, Kerry had amassed a record on military and intelligence matters that might make George McGovern blush. In the midst of a war on terror, this was a liability. Vietnam was the answer, a way to immunize Kerry from charges that he is too soft on national security to be president. The Kerry equation was simple. He had defended America in Vietnam and he would defend America as president. By the end of the convention, he was to be fully inoculated and could turn to bashing President Bush on the economy, education, and other issues.

McCain and Bush

Landov / Reuters / Kevin Lamarque

But Vietnam came back to bite him. *Unfit for Command*, a book accusing Kerry of distorting his Vietnam record, attracted national attention, mostly on talk radio and Internet blogs, when it was published in early August. Kerry initially disregarded the book and a TV ad in which the Swift boat commanders attacked Kerry's war record. Then he changed his tactic, elevating Vietnam and making it a front-page story by denouncing both the book and the ad as a "smear." But since Kerry labels almost all criticism of himself as a smear, this response had little effect. At this point, the Kerry campaign lost any chance of controlling the controversy and succeeded only at prolonging it.

Kerry claimed that President Bush was behind the ad and said the president should demand the spot be taken off the air. But Kerry had no serious evidence to buttress his claim. Bush declined to denounce the Swift Boat ad, but explained he wished all independent ads attacking presidential candidates would cease and desist. This meant millions of dollars in ads zinging Bush by left-wing groups. Bush's move left Kerry in a bind. The ads are an indispensable adjunct to Kerry's campaign, fully legal of course. But even if Kerry wanted to stop them, which he doesn't, he hasn't the authority, just as Bush hasn't the authority to stifle the Swift Boat ads.

The Kerry campaign effectively disputed some Vietnam allegations, but not others. In struggling to validate Kerry's claim that he spent Christmas Eve 1968 in Cambodia, his aides confused the geography of Vietnam and conflated Kerry's two separate assignments there. Later, they gave up, conceding Kerry probably wasn't in Cambodia in 1968. Also, at McCain's insistence, they removed an anti-Bush ad with a clip of McCain confronting Bush in 2000. Then they tried a stunt, dispatching former Democratic senator Max Cleland of Georgia, a triple amputee veteran of Vietnam, to Texas to give Bush a letter calling for him to stop the Swift Boat ads.

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Used to a sympathetic media, the Kerry campaign miscalculated how the press would react. They should have known reporters love to unmask stunts. "Can you explain what the genesis of this trip was?" one reporter asked Cleland. "Because yesterday, Senator Kerry . . . said, let's move on. Let's discuss the issues of this campaign. And now you fly down here and draw further attention to the Swift Boat ads, further attention to the controversy. What does the Kerry campaign want? Does it want us to focus on the Swift Boat ads or does it want us to focus on the issues?" Cleland was confounded. He responded with an attack on Bush.

Oddly enough, the flap may have brought Bush and McCain closer together. Although McCain had already been campaigning at Bush's side, aides of Bush believe McCain has become more fervent in his support because of his distaste for Kerry's stress on Vietnam. A more cynical view is that McCain, 68, is reconciling with Bush Republicans with an eye to running for president in 2008. In any case, while McCain said Bush should specifically condemn the first Swift Boat ad, the two agreed that all independent ads by so-called 527 groups should be stopped. This put the spotlight on pro-Kerry 527s, which have spent more than $60 million vilifying Bush.

That was not Kerry's biggest Vietnam problem. A second TV spot by the Swift Boat vets criticizes Kerry's antiwar activity after he returned from Vietnam. In a meeting with editors of the *Washington Post* last week, McCain distinguished between this ad and the first one disputing Kerry's service. It is an important distinction. Kerry's antiwar stance, especially his 1971 Senate testimony accusing American troops of committing war crimes daily in Vietnam, has always been a ripe target. Now McCain has, in effect, given a green light to zeroing in on it. This makes it difficult for Kerry to insist the second ad is over the line. McCain, who was a POW in North Vietnam at the time Kerry was talking about war crimes, believes Kerry's Senate testimony was both wrong and harmful.

Kerry's fixation on Vietnam caught Bush campaign advisers by surprise. They expected him to pound Bush on domestic issues at the convention. They believe he blundered by concentrating on the one thing everyone already knew about him: He's a Vietnam vet. Worse, he turned his advantage on Vietnam into a disadvantage. Kerry has only himself to blame. "I don't think there's any doubt that Senator Kerry made [Vietnam] a very big part of his campaign and therefore legitimized this issue," McCain told the *Chicago Tribune*. Now he's paying a price for not heeding McCain's advice in the first place. ♦

A Conspiracy Too Vast

Democratic paranoia about Republican "dirty tricks." BY NOEMIE EMERY

THE MINUTE the ads of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth had begun to draw blood, the Democrats attacked them as a giant, malevolent plot. The same plot, drawn up by a diabolical genius of unsurpassed malice and cunning, that has been causing Democrats trouble for so many years now, always unwarranted, always malicious, and always unfair. In today's Democratic imagination, there are no political accidents, no spontaneous movements, no genuine issues, and never a genuine weakness in a candidate. There are only diversions, cooked up and cleverly sold to a gullible public, "dirty tricks" supervised by conniving Republican masterminds, and schemes to undermine democracy.

The first instinct of Democrats during the recall election that claimed the political life of California governor Gray Davis last year was to call it the latest phase in a Republican plot to subvert the government—the previous ones being a redistricting effort by Texas Republicans, the recount in Florida after the 2000 election, and the impeachment of Clinton two years before that. But it was the Democrats who pioneered and perfected the art of destroying a foe through sexual harassment claims.

And removing Clinton would only have helped Democrats, as it would have transferred power to Al Gore who would no doubt have been elected easily in 2000, as an incumbent riding a wave of peace and prosperity, minus Clinton's many embarrassing problems. In the Florida recount, it is certainly true that eyes were gouged and crotches kneed by all sides. But it was not the deviously gifted Republicans who weeks before the election assembled battalions of lawyers in 20 key states, drew up elaborate plans to litigate the election results, flew a planeload of lawyers into Tallahassee in the early morning after the election, and sent Gore's campaign manager into the state to declare, with Bush ahead, and with no recounts yet started, that the state should be "awarded" to Gore. And the plan to change the congressional districts in Texas to favor Republicans? It would indeed be outrageous, if it were not an effort to undo an equally outrageous redistricting 10 years ago that drew them to favor the Democrats. (The best solution would be to erase congressional districts all over the country and replace them

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with a grid of square boxes. But I digress.) As for the recall in California, Democrats claim it had nothing to do with the monstrous unpopularity of Governor Davis, and everything to do with a desire to put a Republican in a statehouse then held by the Democrats. But when the recall petition was announced, there was no guarantee that Arnold Schwarzenegger would enter the contest, much less win it.

The problem with all of these charges is that they (1) involve things that are perfectly legal (provisions for impeachment and recall are in the federal and state constitutions), (2) involve tactics earlier used or invented by Democrats, or (3) concern events that might easily have ended up helping Democrats. This is a plot?

Most of the charges against the Republicans fall under the heading "dirty tricks." A "dirty trick" is any tactic used against Democrats in an election they later lose. Dirty tricks are invariably orchestrated by a dark genius (think Karl Rove or Lee Atwater), who has the power to exert mind control over vast populations. Usually, the trick consists of hanging a lantern on a glaring flaw in a Democrat that anyone not a Democrat could already spot miles away.

In 1988, it was, of course, Willie Horton (aka the Massachusetts prison furlough scandal) that was instrumental in changing a 17-point lead for Michael Dukakis when his convention was over to a 10-point lead for George Bush the elder on Election Day. In this case, Atwater was so fiendishly clever that he had managed 12 years before the election to implant in Dukakis's brain the idea that letting violent criminals out on unsupervised weekend furloughs was a step in the march of compassionate progress. (As governor, Dukakis had in 1976 vetoed a ban on furloughs for murderers.) Atwater then further exercised his mysterious powers so that when one of these furloughed murderers (Willie Horton) raped and assaulted a young couple in Maryland, he influenced Dukakis to adopt a tone of defiant indifference when the victims tried to complain. Atwater then got inside the brain of CNN anchor Bernard Shaw, who at the first presidential debate asked Dukakis the killer question—What would he do if his own wife should be raped or murdered?—to which Dukakis replied, in effect: Nothing much.

To most people watching, this was the sequence of events that finished Dukakis, but Democrats then and thereafter saw it differently. To them, the big thing that swung the election was one TV ad put out by an independent committee, months after the issue had begun to find traction, which showed that Willie Horton was . . . black. To most Americans, Dukakis had serious problems with crime and punishment issues, not to say common sense; to Democrats, Republicans were bigots who didn't mind being killed unless they were killed by black criminals. A lily-white killer won't do.

Between 1988 and the rise of the Swifties, the dirtiest trick of all may have been the entire 2002 midterm election, with Bush's top operative Karl Rove pulling the strings. First, Rove created the war on terror, to distract attention from the Democrats' favorite issues. Then he somehow induced Saddam Hussein to act as if he had megadeath weapons, to force a confrontation that had been brewing for years. Then he hoodwinked prominent Democrats into saying they believed Saddam did have those weapons. Then he put a gun to the head of Tom Daschle and forced him to add a clause to the Democrats' version of the homeland defense bill to placate the Democrats' friends in the public-employee unions. (It would have made it harder for the president to redeploy personnel in the event of an emergency.) Still under Rove's influence, Daschle induced several Democratic senators, including Jean Carnahan and Max Cleland, to defend this provision, which a great many voters would find incomprehensible. They lost, and it was all Rove's fault.

With this under his belt, it was no stretch at all for Rove to go out and find some 246 Vietnam-era veterans, most of whom had served near or with Kerry, and get them to pretend that they had been seething with anger for some 30 years. Of course, anything Kerry himself might have said or done to torque off so many people had nothing to do with it, just as the votes cast by Democrats play no part in the results when they lose elections, and anything Dukakis said or did about that unfortunate incident had nothing to do with his loss.

Rational people think differently. As David Broder points out in the *Washington Post*, the Swift boat controversy is part of a war that will die only with the last boomer, and one that John Kerry should have foreseen. "Kerry may be judged naive to have thought that Vietnam would be a golden credential . . . and not an inevitable source of controversy," Broder writes. "In a 2002 conversation, Kerry told me he thought it would be doubly advantageous that 'I fought in Vietnam and I also fought against the Vietnam War,' apparently not recognizing that some would see far too much political calculation in such a bifurcated record." In short, the Swifties' reaction was predictable, and rooted in Kerry's behavior and choices. Kerry, like Dukakis in 1988 and the 2002 Democrats, made his own problems. But don't tell that to the Kerry campaign.

As Tod Lindberg notes in the *Washington Times*, contemporary Democrats are almost unique among modern political groups in the extent to which they tend to trace all of their setbacks to monstrous and sinister plots. But perhaps they may have to, as a way of reframing a set of reversals they would otherwise find it extremely painful to explain.

In some ways, Democrats never recovered their bearings after the 1980 election, and have still not come to terms with what it all meant. At first, they consoled themselves with the thought that Reagan was an

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anomaly, an ex-movie star gifted with Hollywood stardust, who had, like The Shadow, the mysterious ability to cloud men's minds. They told themselves that he was a detour, a blip on the screen that would not be repeated. He was an act of God, like an earthquake or a hurricane, that could not be avoided but had to be lived through, and things would go back to normal once he left the scene.

He did leave the scene, but things did not go back to normal, so they ascribed the victory of George Bush the Elder to the Reagan afterglow and Atwater's black magic, and assumed things would go back to normal after that. Then Bill Clinton did win, and things did go back to normal, with themselves in the White House, and both houses of Congress. But "normal" lasted only two short years before the Republicans stormed into Congress, and Bill Clinton was forced to veer right. And this was the least of their woes.

Republican presidents, like Nixon and Eisenhower, had won landslide elections without disturbing the Democrats' place as the majority party, and a tied election like that in 2000 could be dismissed as an oddity. What could not be dismissed was the slow, steady march of the Republican party toward parity, as the Democrats lost ground. It was in the Clinton years that the Democrats' last edge eroded, and finally vanished completely. A single president can win on the basis of circumstance and of personality, but the institutional advance of the party as a philosophy and an institution is something entirely different and deeper, and moves into the realm of ideas.

What this suggests—that Democrats are sometimes rejected for very good reasons; that the party has some serious internal problems; that Republicans have some ideas that are appealing to people—is something many liberals simply can't swallow. To them, all Republican victories are on their face illegitimate, won by appeals to bias or ignorance. But mainly by sinister plots. ♦

Notes from the Undergrad

John Kerry was always a dove—starting in college.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

IN 1965, JOHN KERRY, a junior at Yale and the newly appointed head of the Yale Political Union, was invited to give a speech at Choate, the tony prep school known mainly for its famous alumni Franklin Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy. Like Yale, Choate is in Connecticut, so Kerry didn't have to travel far. He went with his best friend, David Thorne, whose sister, Julia, would one day be Kerry's first wife. When they arrived at Choate, Kerry and Thorne, accompanied by the school's administrators, were led on a VIP tour of the facilities. Kerry's name was announced on the loudspeaker. A reporter from a Hartford radio station was there, too, for an interview with Kerry, who was all of 21 years old.

Head of the Yale Political Union is a high-profile position, a launching pad for careers both literary (William F. Buckley Jr., for example) and political (think Joseph Lieberman). Yet it was unusual, Douglas Brinkley writes in *Tour of Duty*, his biography of Kerry, for a junior in college to be treated as a special guest speaker at a place like Choate. Word of Kerry's debating skills, it seems, had spread. Kerry, dressed in his "handsomest suit," his rhetoric polished, his gestures rehearsed, spoke to about 30 high school students for nearly an hour. The topic was the war in Vietnam. Kerry was against it.

And he was nervous. "I hadn't any time to go over my speech at length before I gave it, and I was afraid that I would be too glued to my notes," Kerry wrote to Julia Thorne afterward. "But when I got up there, I felt sharper and more confident than I have ever felt before." A feeling of certainty enveloped him. He looked at his notes only rarely. He was pleased with how the question and answer session went as well. In fact, he wrote, "I really was pleased to pieces and very encouraged by the whole visit."

The speech—the snippets of it that survive, anyway—remains interesting, if only as a historical artifact. Over the last two weeks, of course, a group of anti-Kerry Vietnam veterans have run ads questioning John Kerry's service record and subsequent antiwar activities. But this narrative is incomplete. Kerry was already against the war *before* he went to Vietnam.

Look at the speech he gave at Choate that winter day in 1965. Kerry "declined to offer any proposals for ending the conflict," writes Douglas Brinkley. Instead, he waxed historical. The talk "outlined the history of Vietnam, covering everything from French colonialism to the rise of Ho Chi Minh to the lessons of the 1954 Geneva Conference, which had partitioned the country into two uneasy nations," Brinkley continues. Kerry's position on the conflict was—you guessed it—nuanced. He told the high school students that "he had originally supported a complete U.S. withdrawal on the grounds that the South Vietnamese government had fallen into disarray, anti-Americanism pervaded Southeast Asia, the Johnson administration's policies were failing, and the

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domino theory was a myth." But there were no easy answers. Kerry also understood "how important it remained for the United States not to lose face." Hence, Brinkley says, Kerry felt the Johnson administration had two options in Indochina: "Score a military victory" or "negotiate a peace."

"In the future," the Yale junior intoned, "the U.S. must fix goals which are tenable." The war in Vietnam wasn't such. What's more, "these goals should recognize priorities," and those priorities should "correspond minutely with our best national interests." The Cold War's Manichaean dichotomy—"Us" (the free world) against "Them" (the Communists)—troubled him. "We should concern ourselves less with other ideologies and attempt to apply a policy which is both sensitive and compatible with the expressed desires and cultures of the people involved," Kerry said. The lesson, in other words, was that American involvement in Vietnam was a mistake. And it should not be repeated.

Over the next year, as the United States continued to entangle itself in Vietnam, the future senator's positions grew more strident. For Kerry, we are told, these were difficult conclusions to reach. According to the *Boston Globe* biography *John F. Kerry*, "as a student and later a senator, Kerry often internally debated an issue before making up his mind in a process that could take weeks." In 1996, in one of his last interviews, Kerry's father Richard told the *Globe* that, while he always "thought [Vietnam] a serious policy mistake," his son's attitude early on was "gung ho: had to show the flag." Richard Kerry scoffed and said, "He was quite immature in that direction." But things changed; military service loomed; soldiers continued to die in the rice paddies and dark jungles. "As a senior," Richard Kerry said, John "matured considerably."

As John Kerry's antiwar stance developed, so did his profile at Yale. In March 1965, he won the Ten Eyck

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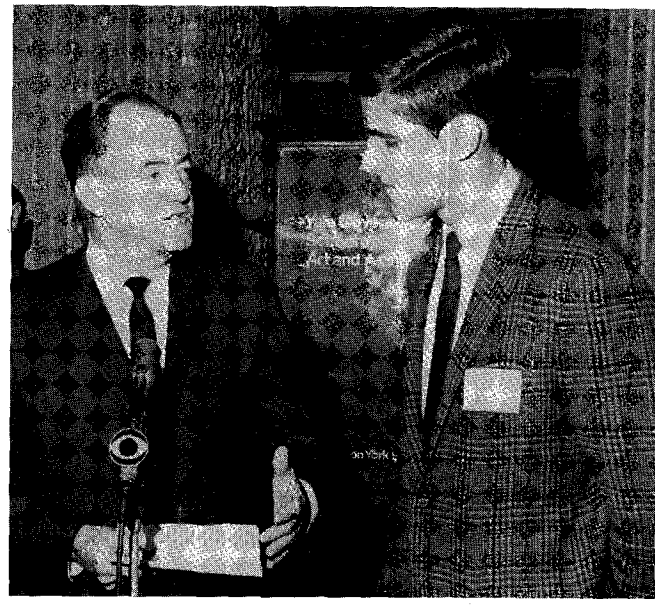
Speech Prize, which came with a $125 award. This was for another speech on Vietnam. Kerry had expanded his thematic palette: "The theme of his competitive address," Brinkley writes, "billed as a search for a modern-day Prometheus—was the inherent danger of America's stretching itself too thin in its international commitments." Wars like Vietnam were "self-defeating," Kerry said. Indeed, he continued, "it is the specter of Western Imperialism that causes more fear among Africans and Asians than communism." And self-defeating conflicts led inexorably to imperial hubris. Kerry said the United States was "grossly overextended" in "areas where we have no vital primary interest."

Kerry didn't limit his thoughts on the war to debate matches and public speeches. He talked about the war's shortcomings with his friends, often other members of the secret society Skull & Bones. One Bonesman, named Alan Cross, tells an interesting story in *John F. Kerry*: "When Johnson had greatly increased the troops being sent into Vietnam," Cross said, "Kerry sort of made a spontaneous speech to the others of us in the audience decrying the implications of this political event and what this meant in terms of our engagement in Vietnam." For Cross, Kerry's words expressed not so much outright opposition as concern: "I think he was alarmed by what we were doing," he told the *Globe*. "That doesn't mean we were opposed to what we were doing. He saw this growing quagmire we were heading into with good intention and certain results," Cross went on. "My recollection of that talk is that it was not so much a statement of opposition but was really a clarion" for action. It was a call that Kerry sounded repeatedly.

Kerry's most famous college speech was on June 12, 1966, when he delivered the Yale class oration. This was quite an honor. Kerry was 22. He was told he would give the address sometime in the spring, and a week before graduation he'd cobbled together a treacly address on "life after graduation." This first draft of the speech, Kerry said later, was "sophomoric." One night in June, on Deer Island in the St. Lawrence River in upstate New York, a Skull & Bones redoubt where he was vacationing with friends, Kerry had a revelation. "I decided that I couldn't give" the speech he'd drafted, he later told Joe Klein in the *New Yorker*. So instead Kerry stayed up all night, writing and writing, "with a candle" providing the only light in the room, and then, as the night drew on, "rewriting and rewriting," until he had completed a new draft, which, he said, was the best expression of "what we were all thinking about": Vietnam.



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Kerry with Vice President Hubert Humphrey at Yale, 1965

Kerry's class oration is notable for many reasons. It is notable for its rhetoric, which echoes, a bit amateurishly, that of the Kennedys, and which set the tone for Kerry's subsequent speeches. "Where we should have instructed," Kerry said, "it seems we did not; where we should have been patient, it seems we were not; where we should have stayed clear, it seems we would not."

The oration is notable for its rejection of American exceptionalism. "It is misleading to mention right and wrong in this issue," Kerry said, "for to every thinking man, the semantics of this contest often find the United States right in its wrongness and wrong in its rightness." On American power, Kerry continued, "the United States must . . . bring itself to understand that the policy of intervention"—meaning, intervention against communism—"that was right for Western Europe does not and cannot find the same application to the rest of the world."

And again:

> What was an excess of isolationism has become an excess of interventionism. . . . And this Vietnam War has found our policymakers forcing Americans into a strange corner . . . [so] that if victory escapes us, it would not be the fault of those who led, but of the doubters who stabbed them in the back—notions all too typical of an America that had to find Americans to blame for the takeover in China by the Communists, and then for the takeover in Cuba.

The speech is notable, too, for its prefiguring of Kerry's current critique of the Bush administration: "Never in the last 20 years," Kerry said, "has the government of the United States been as isolated as it is today."

Read it closely, however, and what strikes you most about the Yale speech isn't its pretension. Or its Ted Sorenson-like flourishes. You are struck instead by the way in which it summarizes, so neatly and so early in his career, John Kerry's central critique of American foreign policy—the way in which the speech enumerates the ideas Kerry used

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when he talked about foreign policy into the 1990s—when he first heard the distant siren song of presidential politics, and thus moderated his positions, supporting interventions in the Balkans and, most famously, in Iraq last year.

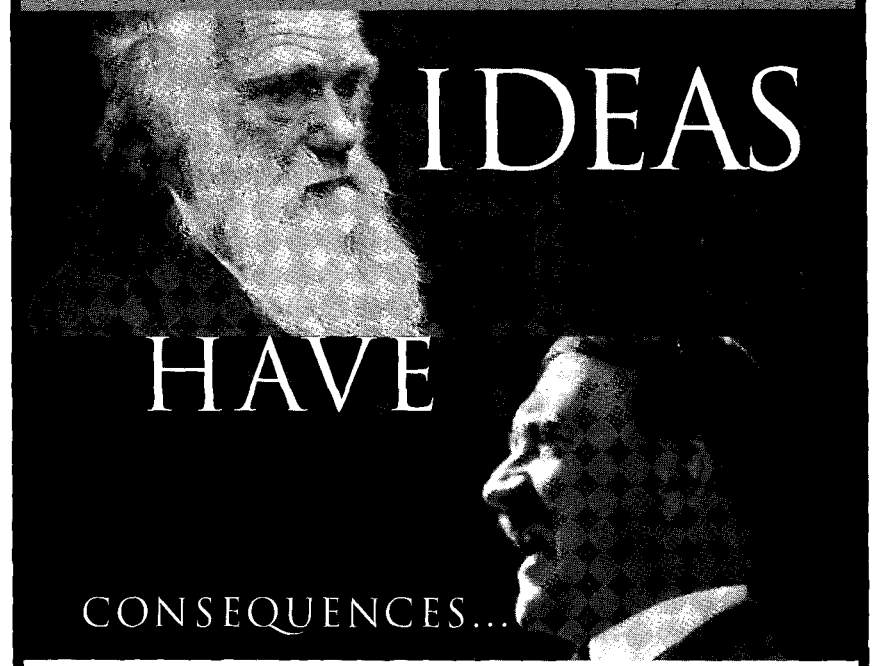
Yet the John Kerry who spoke on June 12, 1966, was the same John Kerry who, home from Vietnam, addressed the Fulbright Committee on April 22, 1971. It was the same Kerry who supported a nuclear freeze in his Democratic primary fight against James Shannon in 1984. It was the same Kerry who opposed Ronald Reagan's 1983 invasion of Grenada, of which Kerry said at the time, "No substantial threat to U.S. interests existed and American lives were not endangered. . . . The invasion represented a bully's show of force against a weak Third World nation." It was the same Kerry who spoke out against Reagan's funding of the anti-Communist contras in the 1980s; the same Kerry who told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1985, "I said then [in 1971], and I still believe, that we can't be hamstrung about intervening everywhere."

And it was the same Kerry who, on January 19, 1991, took to the floor of the U.S. Senate to speak out against the first Gulf War. "Are we ready for the changes this war will bring?" Kerry asked then. "Changes in sons and daughters who return from combat never the same. . . . Are we ready for another generation of amputees, paraplegics, burn victims?" "There is a rush to war here," Kerry went on. The United States was acting "with more bravado than patience." His view of intervention was grim. "It sounds like we are risking war for pride," he continued, "not vital interests!"

They are the same words and ideas, uttered again and again, at various times and places, over 30 years of public life. John Kerry's skepticism toward American intervention in foreign crises isn't a battle scar left from Vietnam. It is who he is. ◆

FROM DARWIN TO HITLER

EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS, EUGENICS, AND RACISM IN GERMANY



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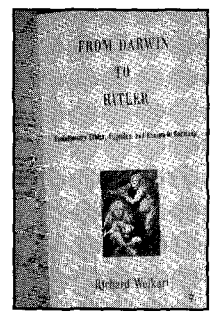

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The Not-So-Swift Mainstream Media

And how they were forced to cover a story they hated. **BY JONATHAN V. LAST**

DURING THE AUGUST 19 edition of PBS's *NewsHour*, Tom Oliphant unspooled. "The standard of clear and convincing evidence—and it's easy when you leave out the exculpatory stuff—is what keeps this story in the tabloids," the *Boston Globe* columnist sputtered, "because it does not meet basic standards." "This story" (shades of "that woman") is the story of the Swift boat veterans who have raised a number of troubling allegations against John Kerry. Sitting across from John O'Neill, coauthor of *Unfit for Command* and John Kerry's successor as commander of PCF-94 in Vietnam, Oliphant did a fair imitation of Al Gore—sighing, harumphing, and exhaling loudly—whenever O'Neill spoke.

"'Almost conclusive' doesn't cut it in the parts of journalism where I live," Oliphant lectured O'Neill, who graduated first in a class of 554 from the University of Texas Law School and clerked for U.S. Supreme Court justice William Rehnquist. "You haven't come within a country mile of meeting first-grade journalistic standards for accuracy." Watching the media's reaction to the Swift boat controversy, it's clear that many journalists agree with Oliphant.

Two days later, Adam Nagourney paused in the middle of a news story in the *New York Times* to worry about how campaigns should deal with attacks "in this era when so much unsubstantiated or even false information can reach the public through so many different forums, be it blogs or talk-show radio." In an article in *Editor & Publisher*, Alison Mitchell, the deputy national editor at the *Times*, admitted, "I'm not sure that in an era of no-cable television we would even have looked into [the Swift boat story]." James O'Shea, managing editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, went further: "There are too many places for people to get information. I don't think newspapers can be the gatekeepers anymore—to say this is wrong and we will ignore it. Now we have to say this is wrong and here is why."

There are many reasons why the mainstream media don't like the Swift boat story, but chief among them is that they've been strong-armed into covering it by the "new" media: talk-radio, cable television, and Internet blogs.

The Swift boat story first surfaced on May 4, when an op-ed by John O'Neill ran in the *Wall Street Journal*, in print and online, and the group Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, to which O'Neill belongs, held a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The event received scant notice by traditional media. CBS News mentioned it briefly and tried to tie the group to Bush. The *Washington Post* and *New York Times* had short items about it, as did the *Boston Globe*. The most in-depth coverage came from the Fox News Channel. On the May 4 edition of *Special Report*, Carl Cameron reported on the press conference, aired some of the Swifties' allegations, and then reported that certain of these veterans—Grant Hibbard and George Elliott—had previously supported John Kerry, immediately casting doubt on them.

The story went away for a while, but was always lurking in dark corners of the Internet, on websites like *KerryHaters.blogspot.com*. And clearly the big media weren't blind to it. "There are a few who served with him who dispute his record and question his leadership," Peter Jennings noted during an ABC News broadcast on July 29. "We'll hear from them in the weeks ahead," he continued, moving abruptly on to a pretaped package on Kerry's Vietnam heroism.

The next big break for the Swifties came on August 4, with the release of their first TV ad. Fox News covered the ad closely. The next night *Hannity & Colmes* featured members of the Swift boat group as well as veterans who supported Kerry.

That same day some print media outlets covered the ad buy, but not the substance of the ad's allegations. On television, only one broadcast network mentioned the spot: CBS spent two sentences on the "harsh" ad, in order to air John McCain's denunciation of it.

On August 6, NBC also reported on the "harsh" ad, but only as a way of segueing into a segment on "527 groups," independent political organizations funded with soft money. On MSNBC, Keith Olbermann mentioned O'Neill's forthcoming *Unfit for Command*. Since it's published by the conservative house Regnery, Olbermann reported, "you now bring in the whole mystical right-wing conspiracy jazz." The night before, Olbermann had repeatedly referred to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as "Swift Boat Veterans for Bush."

But the big news on August 6 was that Regnery allowed people to download the "Christmas in Cambodia" section of O'Neill's book. While Olbermann and others were worrying about mystical jazz, the new media swung into action. Hugh Hewitt, Glenn Reynolds, *Powerline*, and other bloggers immediately began investigating the book's allegations. The blog *JustOneMinute* was the first to find the 1986 "seared—

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seared" speech in which Kerry described his memory of being in Cambodia in December 1968. On August 8, Reynolds took his digital camera to the University of Tennessee law library and photographed the section of the Congressional Record with the Kerry speech, further verifying the chapter's central claim. That same weekend, Al Hunt talked about the Swift boat ad on CNN's *Capital Gang*, calling it "some of the sleaziest lies I've ever seen in politics."

Over the next 11 days, an interesting dynamic took hold: Talk-radio and the blog world covered the Cambodia story obsessively. They reported on border crossings during Vietnam and the differences between Swift boats and PBRs. They also found two other instances of Kerry's talking about his Christmas in Cambodia. Spurred on by the blogs, Fox led the August 9 *Special Report* with a Carl Cameron story on Kerry's Cambodia discrepancy.

All the while, traditional print and broadcast media tried hard to ignore the story—even as Kerry officially changed his position on his presence in Cambodia. Then on August 19, Kerry went public with his counter assault against Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, and suddenly the story was news. The numbers are fairly striking: Before August 19, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* had each mentioned Swift Boat Veterans for Truth just 8 times; the *Los Angeles Times* 7 times; the *Boston Globe* 4 times. The broadcast networks did far less. According to the indefatigable Media Research Center, before Kerry went public, ABC, CBS, and NBC together had done a total of 9 stories on the Swifties. For comparison, as of August 19 these networks had done 75 stories on the accusation that Bush had been AWOL from the National Guard.

After Kerry, the deluge. On August 24, the *Washington Post* ran three op-eds and an editorial on the Swifties; other papers expanded their coverage as well. But, curiously, they didn't try to play catch-up with the new media in ascertaining the veracity of the Swifties' claims. Instead, they pursued (or rather, repeated) the charge Kerry made: that Bush was behind Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. It was a touch surreal—as it would have been if Democratic national chairman Terry McAuliffe's criticism of Bush's National Guard record had prompted the media to investigate Terry McAuliffe.

But even here, it seemed their hearts weren't in it. In *Time* magazine, Joe Klein called the whole affair "incendiary nonsense." As the *Los Angeles Times* observed in an editorial, "Whether the Bush campaign is tied to the Swift boat campaign in the technical, legal sense that triggers the wrath of the campaign-spending reform law is not a very interesting question." As last week wore on, the coverage continued to ignore the specifics of the allegations against Kerry and began to concentrate on the dangers of the new media. In the *New York Times*, Alessandra Stanley warned that in the seedy world of cable news, "facts, half-truths and passionately tendentious opinions get tumbled together on screen like laundry in an industrial dryer—without the softeners of fact-checking or reflection." It is perhaps impolite to note that it took the *Times* nearly four months to catch up with the reporting Carl Cameron did in the beginning of May.

Still, the baying of the *Times* and the rest of the old media is a sign of capitulation. Against their will, the best-funded and most prestigious journalists in America have been forced to cover a story they want no part of—or at the very least, they've been compelled to explain why they aren't covering it. How did this happen? Analyzing how the Swift boat veterans had injected their story into the mainstream media, Adam Nagourney blamed summer. The Swift boat ad buys, he wrote, had "become the subject of

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television news shows . . . because the advertisements and [*Unfit for Command*] were released in August, a slow month when news outlets are hungry for any kind of news."

But Nagourney has it exactly backwards: Even though it was August, network television and most cable news shows stayed away from the Swift boat story for as long as they possibly could.

Instead, James O'Shea is right. An informal network—the new media—has arisen that has the power to push stories into the old media. The combination of talk radio, a publishing house, blogs, and Fox News has given conservatives a voice independent of the old media.

It's unclear which of these was most critical for bringing the Swift boat story out into the open. Without *Unfit for Command*, the story would never have had a focal point with readily checkable facts. Talk radio kept the story alive on a daily basis. The blogs served as fact-checkers vetting the story, at least some aspects of it, for credibility and chewing it over enough so that producers and editors who read the blogs could approach it without worrying they were being snookered by black-helicopter nuts. Despite all that, however, no other medium has the reach of television, which is still the only way to move a story from a relatively small audience of news-obsessives to the general public.

Yet the blogosphere has had a particular interest in taking credit for making the Swift boat story pop. Blogs from *Instapundit* to *The Belmont Club* to *Powerline* were reveling in the demise of the old media and heaping scorn upon professional journalists. "I have been both a lawyer/law professor for two decades and a television/radio/print journalist for 15 years of those 20," Hugh Hewitt blogged. "It takes a great deal more intelligence and discipline to be the former than to be the latter, which is why the former usually pays a lot more than the latter. It is no surprise to me, then, when lawyers/law professors like those at *Powerline* and *Instapundit* prove to be far more adept at exposing the 'Christmas-in-Cambodia' lie and other Kerry absurdities than old-school journalists."

John Hinderaker, one of the bloggers behind *Powerline*, summed up the mood of the blogosphere by comparing journalism with brain surgery: "A bunch of amateurs, no matter how smart and enthusiastic, could never outperform professional neurosurgeons, because they lack the specialized training and experience necessary for that field," he said. "But what qualifications, exactly, does it take to be a journalist? What can they do that we can't? Nothing." ♦

Michael Ramirez

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Kerry's Little Red Bookshelf

What his literary icons have in common.

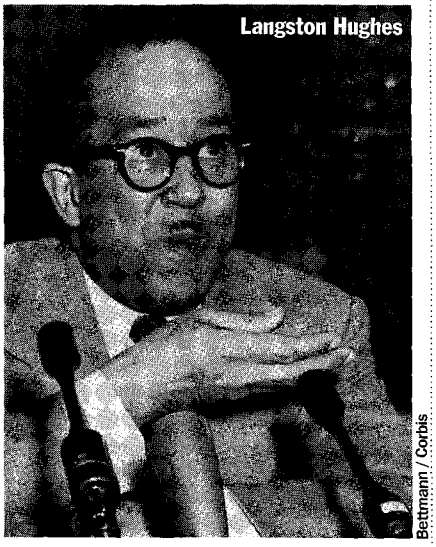
BY ALLAN H. RYSKIND

JOHN KERRY has written the introduction to *Let America Be America Again*, a new but very slim selection of verse by the famous black poet Langston Hughes. In the preface, Kerry insists he was "drawn to incorporate the words" of the title—taken from a poem Hughes wrote in the 1930s—into his presidential run because America is "always in the process of becoming."

That's one way of looking at it. Here's another. Kerry has a special affinity for left-wing literary icons, with Hughes the most conspicuous. Hughes's poem describes America as a place where the "mighty crush the weak" and "millions," yes *millions*, are "shot down when we strike." America is also full of "rape and rot of graft and stealth, and lies." After bashing America silly, the poet says he will still strive to make this nation a nicer place. By nicer place, he meant a Communist place.

Kerry's choice of campaign poet laureate is curious. In the 1930s and 40s, Hughes was, by his own admission, deeply pro-Soviet. He visited Moscow in the 30s, lived there for a time, and loved it. In "Goodbye Christ," he yearns for Christ to move on and make way for a "real guy named Marx Communist Lenin Peasant Stalin Worker ME—I said ME!" "Good Morning, Revolution" hails the "Socialist Soviet Republic" and ends with these stirring words: "Let's Go, Revolution."

Among my personal favorites along these lines: "One More 'S' in the U.S.A.," published in the April 2, 1934, *Daily Worker*, the official organ of the Communist party. The first two lines give us more than a hint of his leanings: "Put one more S in the U.S.A. to make it Soviet." Hughes paid homage to the Soviet Union, Stalin, and Lenin during World War II and even afterwards. He informed senators Joe McCarthy (R.-Wis.) and John McClellan (D.-Ark.) in 1953 that he was no longer enthralled by Moscow, but he always remained a man of the left.


Langston Hughes

Bettmann / Corbis

During the campaign, Kerry has also been frequently heard strumming on his guitar Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land," which, in its original version in 1940, concluded by chiding America for letting people go hungry. Virtually all his adult life, as Ed Cray notes in his favorable biography, Guthrie was a "fellow traveler" who followed the party line quite scrupulously.

He wrote for the *People's World* and the *Daily Worker*, both Communist party publications. He attacked FDR for aiding England during the Hitler-Stalin pact, then switched as soon as Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. Fellow radical and friend Pete Seeger insisted that Woody and he "read the *Daily Worker* and took it as our main guideline in what our politics should be." Cray says Woody "followed the party line even to the extent of endorsing Communist North Korea's invasion of autocratic South Korea."

Hughes's and Guthrie's musings were integral to Kerry's pre-Democratic convention campaign, but Kerry omitted mention of them or their writings in his acceptance speech. A convincing reason: the heartfelt warning to Kerry by his well-wishers at *Slate*, the online liberal publication.

Timothy Noah complained in a July 26 posting that Kerry, by constantly quoting Hughes, was unfortunately "sanitiz[ing] a Stalinist." Please, Noah begged, "do not incorporate the phrase, 'Let America Be America Again' into your acceptance speech this Thursday. The *New York Times* is onto this. The *Washington Post* can't be far behind."

Kerry has shown a penchant for quoting radical folk heroes to prove a point, and not just during this campaign. On January 11, 1991, Kerry leaned on another literary icon of the far left—once a full-fledged Communist party member—in opposing the congressional resolution giving George H.W. Bush the authority to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.

At the end of his Senate speech, Kerry said he "would like to share with my colleagues something that Dalton Trumbo wrote in a book called *Johnny Got His Gun*," a 1939 novel graphically depicting the horrors of war through the protagonist, a completely paralyzed World War I victim.

For reasons only Kerry can explain, the senator deliberately chose the writings of a well-known Hollywood Red to make the case against the Gulf War. A prominent screenwriter, Trumbo was one of the famous Hollywood Ten, those writers, directors, and producers who appeared in 1947 before the

Allan H. Ryskind is editor-at-large of Human Events *and has written extensively on communism in Hollywood.*

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House Committee on Un-American Activities and refused to say whether they were, or had ever been, members of the Communist party.

Long after serving time in jail in the early 1950s for refusing to respond to the question, Trumbo would admit that he had joined the party in 1943, informing his biographer Bruce Cook that his views were such that he "might as well have been a Communist ten years earlier." Trumbo acknowledged that he "reaffiliated" with the party in 1954, apparently having enjoyed the experience so much the first time around.

Kerry, a Yale graduate who views himself as especially literate, should know the history of *Johnny*, but most readers may not. The *Daily Worker*, the CP's flagship publication, began serializing Trumbo's novel in March 1940 when Hitler was just beginning the process of swallowing Western Europe.

To make Hitler's task easier, Stalin, a chum of the Nazi leader since the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, directed each Communist party in the West to launch a unilateral disarmament campaign in the country it inhabited. Saluting Moscow, the American CP battled desperately to stop the United States from rearming and/or assisting any nation or group resisting Hitler's conquering armies. Trumbo's near pacifist message in *Johnny* fit neatly into Stalin's strategy.

Trumbo would suggest in another novel during the pact period that FDR was committing "treason" and even "black treason" for sending planes and guns to help England. Like all true Stalinists, however, he would change his tune after Germany invaded his beloved Soviet Union in June 1941. Only then did Trumbo become convinced that Hitler should be resisted.

John Kerry's choice to feature Trumbo in a key speech—like his taste for literary and artistic fellow travelers generally—may not be curious, given the senator's longstanding pattern of enthusiasm for leftist revolutionary types, from Daniel Ortega to Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Still, it's disconcerting, to say the least, in a potential commander in chief. ♦

Less Respect, More Success

Killing terrorists is more important than making friends. BY MAX BOOT

One of John F. Kerry's most damning accusations against President Bush is that he has made America a global pariah, thereby undercutting the international cooperation we need to win the war on terrorism. Kerry pledges to restore "America's respect and leadership so we don't have to go it alone in the world" and to "rebuild our alliances so we can get the terrorists before they get us."

Opinion polls show that a large number of Americans have bought this argument. The Pew Research Center recently found that 67 percent think the United States is less respected in the world than it used to be, and 43 percent think this is a major problem. It's easy to see why so many people would come to this conclusion, since surveys do show that U.S. popularity has declined in many countries during the past four years. Obviously it's better, all things being equal, to be liked than disliked. Kerry has a point when he accuses the Bush administration of squandering some opportunities to garner support abroad. The mishandling of Turkey before the Iraq war is a case in point.

Where Kerry is dead wrong, demonstrably wrong, is in suggesting that this unpopularity is taking a heavy toll on America's efforts to win the war on terrorism. Actually, by all indications, the United States is now getting significantly *more* cooperation in fighting terrorists than it ever did in the balmy days of Bill Clinton, who did all the sweet multilateral things that Kerry endorses—trying to broker an Israeli-Palestinian accord, signing the Kyoto global warming treaty, not offending "Old Europe" or threatening the power of Middle Eastern autocrats.

Early last week, Pakistan announced the arrest of a dozen Islamist radicals who had been plotting attacks on the U.S. embassy and other targets. This comes shortly after the capture of some 25 other jihadists, including a computer expert, Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan, whose arrest led to the exposure of an al Qaeda cell in Britain that was said to be plotting attacks on New York, Newark, and Washington. Recall that until 9/11 Pakistan was a leading supporter of Islamist militants. Portions of its intelligence service and military maintain their links with these fanatics, but Islamabad has become much more responsive to U.S. concerns.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, which turned a blind eye to Islamist terrorism in the 1990s, has been capturing and killing many leading al Qaeda members. In 2002, a Council on Foreign Relations task force rapped the Saudis for not cracking down on terrorist financing. This June, the task force released a follow-up study that found the Saudis, while still far from perfect, had greatly improved: "Saudi Arabia has taken important actions to disrupt domestic al Qaeda cells and has improved and increased tactical law enforcement and intelligence cooperation with the United States, though important questions of political will remain."

Europe, too, is offering unprecedented cooperation with the United States in the fight against terrorism, even though many Europeans disagree

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with U.S. actions in Iraq and elsewhere. Many European countries have passed tough laws that enable them to prosecute or expel supporters of terrorism even if they are not directly implicated in any attacks. French and German forces are serving alongside the U.S. military in Afghanistan and in the waters off Africa and the Arabian peninsula. Both France and Germany, along with many other countries, are also cooperating with the United States in the Proliferation Security Initiative designed to stop nuclear smuggling. This effort paid big dividends with the discovery last year that Abdul Khadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb, was selling nuclear secrets to Libya, Iran, and North Korea. The exposure of Libya's nuclear program led Muammar Qaddafi to renounce all support of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction—one of the biggest victories ever in the fight against nuclear proliferation.

What's going on here? Why are countries from Pakistan to Portugal doing so much to help the United States if George W. Bush has purportedly done so much to alienate them? Chalk it up to pure self-interest. Many nations have come to realize, as they never did in the past, that Islamist terrorists pose a mortal threat to them. Saudi Arabia has significantly boosted its fight against al Qaeda since two attacks in Riyadh in May 2003. Pakistan has done much more since President Pervez Musharraf was almost killed in two assassination attempts in December 2003. Europe has boosted its cooperation since the March 11 bombing of the commuter trains in Madrid. When countries face a mega-threat like this, it doesn't make any difference how popular or unpopular the United States may be. They are happy to cooperate with the U.S. government, any U.S. government, even if it's led by a tough-talking Texan. Or perhaps especially if it's led by a tough-talking Texan.

There was no question that the United States was better liked abroad in the 1990s, at least if public opinion surveys are to be believed, but was it more respected? When the Clinton administration went privately to Middle Eastern countries seeking cooperation against terrorism, it sometimes got significant help—the Jordanians, for instance, helped bust up the 2000 millennium plot. (Jordan has also been very helpful to the Bush administration.) But often the Clinton administration got the cold shoulder from governments that were wary of a fickle America that would likely flee at the first sign of adversity, as it had in Somalia after 18 commandos were killed in 1993. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were actively aiding the Taliban and perhaps even al Qaeda before 9/11 because they were more scared of alienating Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar than Bill Clinton. Bush's steely response to the 9/11 attacks helped change the calculus within these wavering states: They became more wary of trifling with the gunslinger in the White House than with his smooth-talking predecessor. Perhaps for this reason Bush got a good deal of tacit cooperation from Arab regimes even in the controversial overthrow of Saddam Hussein (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain, among others, hosted U.S. troops during Operation Iraqi Freedom), to say nothing of the broader war on terror. These regimes perceived that this time America was serious; it was not like the days of Clinton, when all the United States would do was lob a few cruise missiles and leave neighboring states to deal with the fallout.

Kerry says he could get still more help, especially in Iraq, but how credible is his claim? French and German diplomats throw cold water on Kerry's assertions that, if he were elected, those countries would suddenly rush troops to Iraq. It is doubtful that they would send even a few hundred men, much less the numbers necessary for the kind of rapid drawdown of U.S. forces that Kerry apparently envisions. NATO has made Afghanistan a top priority, but the Europeans still have only 6,400 troops there, as opposed to 20,000 Americans. Even worse, the Europeans are completely reliant on U.S. logistics; they have trouble mustering even a handful of helicopters to transport their troops. Sure, it would be nice to have more foreign help in Iraq—beyond the many nations, such as Poland, Britain, and Ukraine, whose contributions Kerry conveniently overlooks—but it's doubtful that even a French-speaking president could entice more forces into such a dangerous and unsettled situation.

In cataloguing the consequences of American unpopularity abroad, Democrats suggest that Bush is driving more recruits into al Qaeda's arms. This is a real possibility, but it is not a claim that can be verified or falsified, since there is no roll call of terrorists. All we can say for sure is that al Qaeda had no trouble recruiting young Muslims to attack U.S. targets in the 1990s even as Bill Clinton was doing everything possible to make America more popular. The 9/11 attacks were being plotted, after all, while Clinton refrained from a serious military move against terrorists in Afghanistan, in part for fear of disrupting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Far from being mollified by U.S. restraint, Osama bin Laden and his followers were emboldened toward ever more spectacular aggression.

No doubt the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have driven some Islamic zealots over the edge and led them to pick up a rocket-propelled grenade or a homemade bomb. Certainly some Afghans and Iraqis have opportunities they never had before to attack U.S. soldiers, if not U.S. civilians. But it's also true that the international forces opposing al Qaeda have gotten immeasurably stronger during the Bush administration—strong enough to prevent any acts of terrorism on our own soil during the past three years. This record of success will not, unfortunately, last forever, but to have gone even this long without another 9/11 belies the Democratic accusations that America's unpopularity imperils our safety. Perhaps it is George W. Bush's very willingness to do the hard, unpopular things—the kinds of things that Bill Clinton never did, and John F. Kerry most likely never will—that allows us to "get the terrorists before they get us." ♦

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Arnold Does Manhattan

The first time in years he won't have top billing.

BY DAVID DEVOSS

Los Angeles

HIS WIFE IS A KENNEDY. His best friends are Democrats. He supports abortion and is ambivalent about gay marriage. Yet this Tuesday night, California's Arnold Schwarzenegger, governor of a state President Bush has no hope of winning, is delivering a prime-time speech to the Republican National Convention in New York.

Arguably the Republican party's most charismatic leader, Schwarzenegger will be all over New York at the start of the convention. After Tuesday's speech, he'll head to the Boat House in Central Park where he's the guest of honor at a lavish gala hosted by the film and recording industries. The following day, it's off to a school in Harlem for an afternoon photo op. On Thursday, he'll attend a red carpet luncheon for the California delegation at Planet Hollywood. But you won't see Arnold standing beside the California standard during the roll call of the states. Although corporate contributors are underwriting the cost of his visit to the tune of $350,000, he's not even a delegate to the convention. Neither will he appear in the company of George Bush, Dick Cheney, or any other senior administration official. And by the time the president accepts the nomination Thursday night, Schwarzenegger should be back in California watching the balloon drop on TV.

The governor's office in Sacramento initially said Schwarzenegger is departing early because he has to decide the fate of more than 1,000 bills passed in the final hours of the legislative session. But journalists pointed out that the governor has 30 days to process pending legislation. His aides then said the reason he's not staying longer is that a bipartisan governor like Arnold doesn't need to concern himself with frivolous political pomp. A simpler explanation may be that Schwarzenegger knows the final day of the convention belongs to George Bush and sees no reason to linger once the spotlight shifts.

Schwarzenegger knows that the final day of the convention belongs to George Bush and sees no reason to linger once the spotlight shifts.

Everybody in California seems to love Arnold. "He's a PR genius with great instincts who can work a crowd like no politician I've ever seen before," says former governor Pete Wilson. "For Californians, Arnold is a national figure who ranks alongside Colin Powell, John McCain, and Rudy Giuliani," maintains state GOP chairman Duf Sundheim. State senator Tom McClintock, the leading Republican candidate to replace Gov. Gray Davis in last year's recall election until Schwarzenegger entered the race, grudgingly admits, "Arnold's political skills and natural leadership abilities are the best of any governor I've ever worked with." Even the *Los Angeles Times*—which opposed the recall, made Hollywood philandering a campaign issue, and continues to criticize his eccentricities—conceded in a recent editorial that "somehow the cloak of failure doesn't fit him."

Some of Schwarzenegger's most vocal supporters, however, privately worry that the self-proclaimed "action governor" is too quick to compromise, has done little to eliminate the legislative gridlock that prompted the controversial recall, and has failed to move rapidly to restore fiscal balance to the state budget.

If criticism is muted, it's because Californians no longer sell Arnold short. In less than a year in office, he has won voter approval for $15 billion in bonds that saved the state from financial ruin, convinced several Indian tribes to give the state a larger percentage of their gambling revenues, pushed legislation that lowered the cost of workers' compensation, and initiated a major study on ways to make state government more efficient.

The biggest change may be that California for the first time in memory has a governor with a mesmerizing personality with whom people identify. Operating out of a canvas smoking tent erected on a patio outside his Capitol office, Schwarzenegger welcomes visitors with a cigar and an invitation to swing the 3-foot sword he used in *Conan the Barbarian*. The tent is a small corner of Hollywood transplanted to the Sacramento Valley. Show business friends like Danny DeVito and Rob Lowe stop by often and are generous with advice regarding staff-prepared speeches that Schwarzenegger continues to call "scripts." According to various accounts, it's also a hangout for weight-lifting buddies who occasionally join the governor in gulping handfuls of nutritional supplements that include flax seed oil, B-12 vitamins, and Ester-C.

East-West News Service editor David DeVoss reports on California politics.

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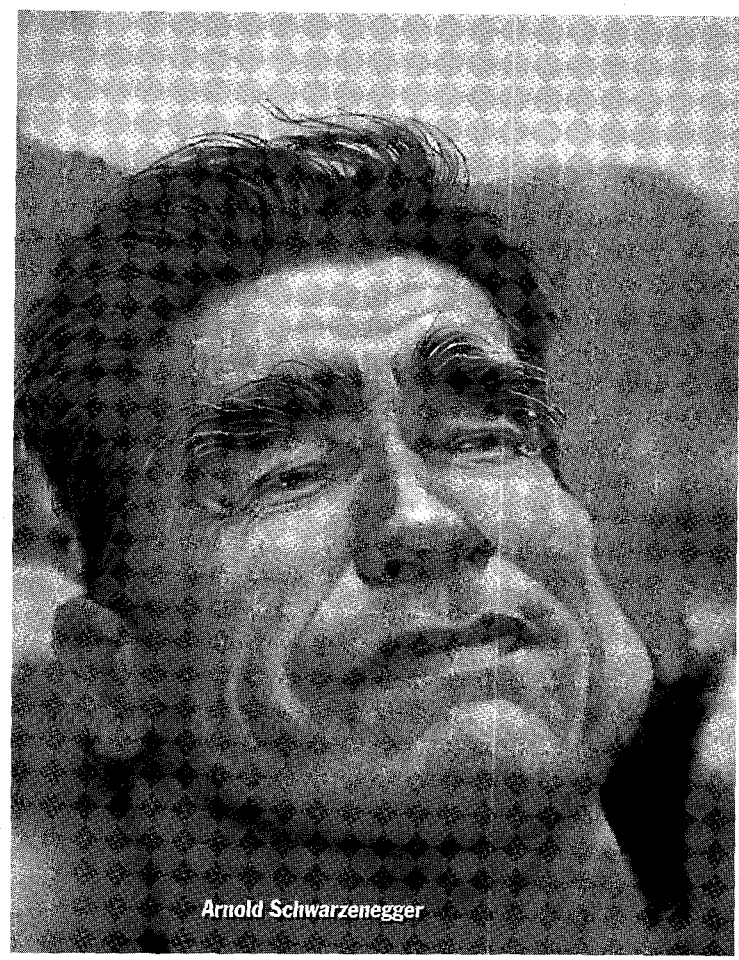
Incessant fundraising was a major factor contributing to the demise of Gray Davis. During the campaign, Schwarzenegger promised he would never cater to special interests, if only because he was a millionaire not dependent on political donations. He did use his own money, much of it coming from personal bank loans he intended to have political contributors repay after the election. But a Sacramento judge ruled the scheme illegal. After that, Schwarzenegger was aggressively looking for contributions. So far this year his fundraising efforts have netted an average of $2 million a month, about $400,000 more than the $1.6 million Gray Davis averaged during his five years in office.

Schwarzenegger's quest for cash has attracted relatively little criticism, perhaps because much of it goes for perks for political allies. About $450,000 has been spent this year on travel for consultants and political aides, some of whom are rewarded with trips on the executive jet leased by his Santa Monica production company. He paid campaign consultants $1.5 million, spent $437,000 on attorneys and accountants, and gave pollsters more than $300,000. Along with the carrots comes the occasional stick. Recently, he funded a separate political corporation with $240,000 to pay for political rallies in districts where uncooperative legislators need to be shown who's boss.

Schwarzenegger is not shy when it comes to taking credit for political accomplishments. In June he celebrated a deal with five Indian tribes that should produce $1.5 billion in additional state revenues. Beneath an enormous banner reading "Promises Made; Promises Kept" in a ceremony that could have been directed by Howard Hawks, Schwarzenegger and the Indian chiefs exchanged gifts and did everything but smoke a peace pipe. Such high production values don't come cheap. Schwarzenegger paid vendors like San Francisco's Hartmann Studios more than $600,000 this year to choreograph his public appearances.


Arnold Schwarzenegger

Thomas Fluharty

But not all of the governor's achievements are worth celebrating. Wearing a dark gray suit, lime-green tie, and cowboy boots embroidered with the governor's official seal, Schwarzenegger praised California's $105 billion state budget at a festive signing earlier this month. "This is a fair and responsible budget," he said, smiling. "It is balanced and it does not raise taxes." Noticeably absent from the ceremony were most of the state's 46 Republican legislators, more than a third of whom refused to vote for the document.

In fact, the budget is balanced only because of massive borrowing, accounting tricks, and false revenue assumptions. State spending has actually increased and so dramatically that deficits of up to $10 billion are projected for each of the next two years. "You can be a popular governor or an effective governor," says *Sacramento Bee* political columnist Dan Walters. "Unfortunately, Arnold loves to be loved."

"Schwarzenegger arrived in Sacramento with impressive political skills and a clear mandate to clean house," Walters adds. "Despite this leverage he's been surprisingly eager to roll over. For all his tough talk, he's the real girly man."

Some political observers believe Schwarzenegger will declare victory at a huge political rally and return to Hollywood when his term expires in 2006. Others predict he'll run for the Senate against Dianne Feinstein so he can exit Sacramento before all California's debts come due. Reportedly, Maria Shriver is no longer looking for a house in Sacramento, a fact that is cited as proof for both scenarios.

Close friend and political mentor Pete Wilson knows only what's not likely to occur. "Arnold has no interest in any legislative role," he says. "The next obvious step would be up to the national level where he could be chief executive or vice president. But that's not going to happen." ♦

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Fahrenheit 1971

The radicalism of the young John Kerry

By Mackubin Thomas Owens

> We will not quickly join those who march on Veterans' Day waving small flags, calling to memory those thousands who died for the "greater glory of the United States." We will not accept the rhetoric. We will not readily join the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars—in fact, we will find it hard to join anything at all and when we do, we will demand relevancy such as other organizations have recently been unable to provide. We will not take solace from the creation of monuments or the naming of parks after a select few of the thousands of dead Americans and Vietnamese. We will not uphold the traditions which decorously memorialize that which was base and grim. . . . We are asking America to turn from false glory, hollow victory, fabricated foreign threats, fear which threatens us as a nation, shallow pride which feeds of fear.
>
> *John F. Kerry*
> *Epilogue to* The New Soldier *(1971)*

When the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial was unveiled in Washington, D.C., in the 1980s, there was a great deal of talk about "healing" the divisions of the Vietnam war. The controversy generated by the anti-Kerry book *Unfit for Command* and ads run by an organization called Swift Boat Veterans for Truth criticizing John Kerry's record in Vietnam and his actions after he returned indicates that there is still a lot of "healing" to do. Indeed, the divisions over the Vietnam war may well never heal as long as those who fought it and those who protested it are still alive. This is because the very act of remembering Vietnam places one in the midst of a culture war.

On the one side in this culture war are those who believe that Vietnam wasn't very different from other wars. The cause was just, but it was as affected by ambiguities as any other war, including World War II. In the end, the U.S. defeat was the result of strategic failure, not moral failure. Those who fought it were doing their duty as they saw it, just as their fathers and grandfathers had done theirs when the times demanded it of them.

On the other side are those for whom the Vietnam war represented the very essence of evil. The United States had no business fighting this war and could never have won it. It was not like other wars. All it did was wreck lives, American and Vietnamese. It was one continuous atrocity. War crimes were par for the course. Those who fought it were different from those who fought the "good war." They returned home psychologically if not physically crippled—homeless, drug addicted, and likely to commit suicide.

Some on the anti-Vietnam side have moderated their views in light of what happened in the aftermath of the U.S. withdrawal from Southeast Asia. They stipulate that they were wrong about communism. The cost of American defeat was high, especially to the South Vietnamese and Cambodians. The price of South Vietnam's "liberation" was, in addition to Saigon's war dead, a minimum of 100,000 summary executions at the hands of the Communist liberators, a million and a half "boat people," a like number of individuals sentenced to "reeducation camps," genocide in Cambodia, and a perceived shift in the "correlation of forces" that encouraged Soviet adventurism throughout the 1970s. But as Mickey Kaus admitted in an essay that appeared in *Slate* in May 2001 amid the furor over whether the killing of certain civilians by men under the command of former Nebraska senator Bob Kerrey amounted to a war crime, those who had moderated their antiwar views still wanted to be honored for their "idealism": "The Thanh Phong story," Kaus wrote, "reminds us that avoiding serving in Vietnam had an honorable and realistic ethical basis (in addition to its realistic selfish basis)."

But others on the anti-Vietnam side of the culture war continue to take their bearings, either directly or indirectly, from the hard-core opinion of those who believe that the Vietnam war represented all that is evil about America—capitalistic exploitation, racism, and imperialism. Noam Chomsky and H. Bruce Franklin exemplify this view. As the latter writes in "The Vietnam War and the Culture Wars," Vietnam, far from being "an aberration,

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some kind of wayward 'mistake' by a nation long leading the world's march to progress," instead "typified the nation's history from colonial settler regime to global empire." Indeed, for Franklin, the Vietnam war was the culmination of the 600-year-old European crusade to oppress people of color throughout the globe—thus the mass murderer Lt. William Calley (My Lai) was only the latest manifestation of the spirit of that earlier mass murderer, Christopher Columbus.

During his presidential campaign, John Kerry has sought to portray himself as a member of the first group—a veteran proud of his service in Vietnam. In his remarks on July 25 at the Democratic National Convention, Kerry said, "We [veterans] fought for this nation because we loved it. . . . I defended this country as a young man and I will defend it as president." But this sentiment is completely at odds with his infamous testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 22, 1971, wherein he said he and those he spoke for were "ashamed of and hated what we were called on to do in Southeast Asia. . . . And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom . . . is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy."

Most Americans have no idea how radical Kerry's views on Vietnam were. His April 1971 Senate testimony could have been written by Chomsky.

The fact is that most Americans have no idea how radical Kerry's views on Vietnam were. His April 1971 Senate testimony (reprinted in full on pages 9-12) could have been written by Chomsky or Franklin. But the larger reality is even more troubling.

In his indispensable *America in Vietnam*, Guenter Lewy notes the establishment of a veritable war-crimes industry, supported by the Soviet Union, as early as 1965. As Ion Mihai Pacepa, a former Romanian intelligence chief, has recounted, the Soviets set up permanent international organizations—including the International War Crimes Tribunal and the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam—"to aid or to conduct operations to help Americans dodge the draft or defect, to demoralize its army with anti-American propaganda, to conduct protests, demonstrations, and boycotts, and to sanction anyone connected with the war."

Pacepa claims to have been responsible for fabricating stories about U.S. atrocities in Vietnam and "flacking" them to Western news organizations. Lewy writes that "the Communists made skillful use of their worldwide propaganda apparatus . . . and they found many Western intellectuals only too willing to accept every conceivable allegation of [American] wrongdoing at face value." The Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), a small, radical group that never exceeded a membership of 7,000 (including John Kerry) from a pool of nearly 3 million Vietnam (and 9 million Vietnam-era) veterans, essentially "Americanized" Soviet propaganda. When he testified before the Senate in 1971, Kerry was merely repeating charges that had been making the rounds since 1965.

Kerry also claimed that containing communism was no reason to fight in Vietnam.

> In our opinion, and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam, nothing which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America. . . . I want to relate to you the feeling that many of the men who have returned to this country express because we are probably angriest about all that we were told about Vietnam and about the mystical war against communism.
>
> We found that not only was it a civil war, an effort by a people who had for years been seeking their liberation from any colonial influence whatsoever, but also we found that the Vietnamese whom we had enthusiastically molded after our own image were hard put to take up the fight against the threat we were supposedly saving them from.
>
> We found most people didn't even know the difference between communism and democracy.

Perhaps this perspective explains the fact that John Kerry, as he proudly told the Senate, met with the North Vietnamese and Vietcong delegations in Paris in May 1970. According to his testimony, he discussed the peace proposals advanced by the North Vietnamese—especially the eight points of Madame Binh. This all took place while Americans were still fighting and dying in Vietnam. Shortly before Kerry's Senate testimony, other representatives of the VVAW met with the North Vietnamese and VC delegations in Paris.

Many of Kerry's defenders contend that anti-Kerry veterans have no right to criticize his speaking out against the war, especially in view of his service in that war. But it is not his protests against the war that anger veterans so much as his method of doing so. In a recent NPR editorial, James Webb, a genuine hero of the Vietnam war (Navy Cross), the author of *Fields of Fire*, the best novel about Vietnam, and secretary of the Navy during the Reagan administration, observed:

> For most veterans it was not that Kerry was against the war, but that he used his military credentials to denigrate the service of a whole generation of veterans. The Vietnam Veterans Against the War was a very small, highly radical organization. Their stories of atrocious conduct, repeated in lurid detail by Kerry before the Congress, represented

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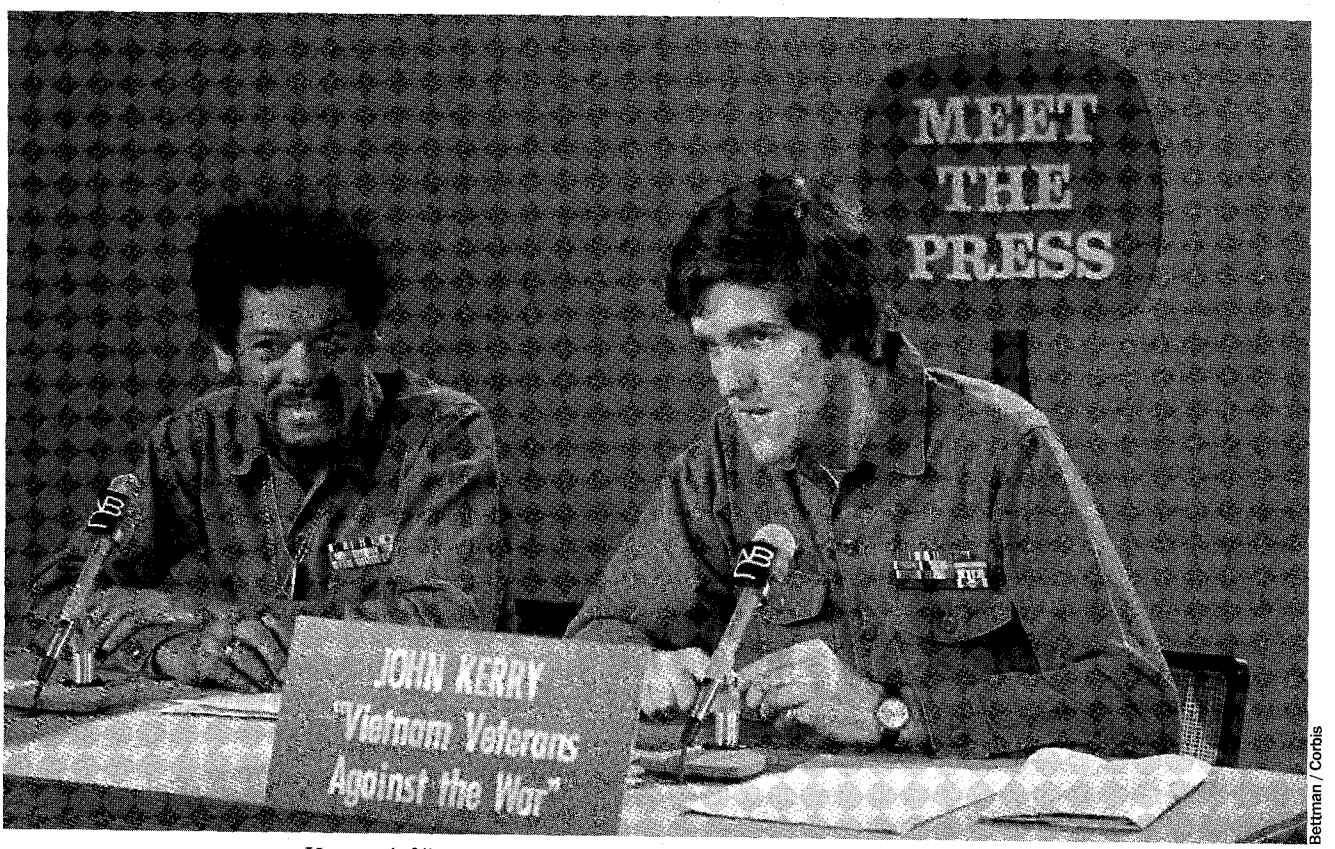

Bettman / Corbis

Kerry with fellow antiwar activist Al Hubbard in Washington, April 18, 1971.

not the typical experience of the American soldier, but its ugly extreme. That the articulate, urbane Kerry would validate such allegations helped to make life hell for many Vietnam veterans, for a very long time.

There were many individuals who returned from Vietnam troubled about the war. Some were critical of U.S. strategy, operations, and tactics in Vietnam. Others came to believe the war was wrong on moral grounds. But most did not slander their comrades using language that mirrored Soviet or Vietnamese Communist propaganda. Most did not consort with the enemy in a time of war. It was possible to oppose the war without doing what Kerry did.

Look at a contemporary example. On the one hand, there are those whose criticism of Iraq is fueled by a visceral hatred for the American polity. For these critics, the war in Iraq is all about oil and Halliburton, just one more manifestation of American imperialism—Bush is Hitler and the United States is "Amerikkka." This is the perspective of Michael Moore, Ramsey Clark, and *MoveOn.org*.

On the other hand, there are many thoughtful people who oppose U.S. policy in Iraq. This group includes individuals I greatly admire and whose judgment I would rarely gainsay, such as the aforementioned Jim Webb (a good friend) and retired Marine general Anthony Zinni, former commander of Central Command. Both criticize the policy and strategy decisions of the Bush administration and express concern about the risks associated with these policies. They don't employ the language of the Bush-haters to denounce the United States for conducting an immoral and unjust war.

Kerry's actions after Vietnam are reminiscent of Michael Moore and *MoveOn.org* today. It was not enough for him merely to criticize U.S. policy in Vietnam. He and his friends in the VVAW were obliged by their radicalism to go after the United States itself.

Kerry could have defused much of the controversy regarding his postwar activities had he simply apologized for his remarks. But he insists on having it both ways: war hero and courageous war protester. The closest he has come was to respond in April 2004 on *Meet the Press* to Tim Russert's query about the testimony by saying, "I'm not going to quibble, you know, 35 years later that I might not have phrased things more artfully at times."

I will not question Kerry's record in Vietnam. But his actions after the war are a different matter. After all, his radical views regarding Vietnam are not simply of historical interest. As the *Wall Street Journal* recently observed, Kerry's denunciation of the United States in 1971 "presaged a career in which he has always been quick to attack the moral and military purposes of American policy—in Central America, against the Soviet Union, and of course during the current Iraq war that he initially voted for." ♦

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The Battle for Wisconsin

A Brahmin among the Cheeseheads

By Stephen F. Hayes

Green Bay

John Kerry may have lost Wisconsin last Wednesday. Lambeau Field is arguably the most historic sporting venue in the United States. Opposing players long for the opportunity to play there. It's the Mecca of American football. Every American male over the age of 4 can finish the description of the field made famous by the pseudo-thunderous voice of ESPN's Chris Berman: "The Froooooozen Tunnnnnnnndra of . . . "

Lambert Field?

That's what John Kerry called it during a stop last week in Green Bay. Lambert Field.

We go now to Scott Stanzel, spokesman for the Bush campaign. "What can you expect from a guy who probably thinks the phrase 'the frozen tundra of Lambeau' is something on the menu in an expensive French restaurant full of foreign leaders?"

To give you some idea of how important Green Bay Packer football is to Wisconsin, consider this:

While most NFL teams struggle to fill the stands for preseason games, the Packers sold out Lambeau Field for an intra-squad scrimmage in which tackling was prohibited.

Every summer, fans ring Clark Hinkle practice field 20-deep to watch the Packers' training camp.

After the Packers won the Super Bowl in 1996, 43.2 percent of males born in the state were named Brett.

I made that last one up, but there sure seem to be a disproportionate number of 8-year-old Bretts running around the state. (Named after quarterback Brett Favre, for you Chicago Bears fans.)

Lambeau Field is so important to the state, and Packers fans so representative of likely Wisconsin voters, that that's where I chose to travel nine days *before* Kerry's gaffe to conduct primary research on the state of the presidential race in Wisconsin.

Stephen F. Hayes, a native of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard.

I started at the Stadium View Sports Bar and Grille, where 24 oz. Miller Lites were selling for an outrageous $6.00. (They came with free green-and-gold New Orleans-style beads, however.) New digital voice-recorder in hand, I approached a busty young woman wearing a cheese-bra—support made out of the foamy, faux-cheese material Packers fans often wear in triangles on their heads. She was not interested in talking about politics.

I had more luck with Brian Budsberg, a retired insurance salesman from Waupaca. Budsberg, accompanied by his brother from Texas, railed against the media's misreporting of Iraq. They're both for Bush.

So was Jose Cornejo from Sussex. Cornejo is a self-described Reagan Democrat who has voted Republican since 1980. He and his wife are voting for Bush.

Over the course of the evening, I interviewed perhaps two dozen voters. Each one claimed to be a Bush supporter. The exception was Linda Marquardt, a graphic designer from Green Bay, who readily agreed to be interviewed when I ordered two more Miller Lites from the Beer Man. (It's capitalized in Wisconsin.) Marquardt was an impressive multitasker. As the third quarter began, she answered questions about the race, participated in the wave, and watched the game. "I'm an anti-Bush voter. I would have voted for whoever the Democrats put up." The Packers lost.

I returned to the Stadium View after the game and struck up a conversation with Trevor Ward, an unemployed bartender from La Crosse, and a friend wearing a hat featuring a ten-point buck devouring a foamy, yellow wedge of cheese. The friend, perhaps understandably, refused to be identified. Ward, too, is a Bush supporter. I asked him why:

Ward: *I'm going to vote for Bush because once I become successful, which I plan on doing, I want my money.*

Me: *But you're not successful yet?*

Ward: *Not yet. . . . I'm unemployed and I'm going to vote for Bush.*

Ward and the deer-cheese guy were good company, so we spent a considerable amount of time discussing how Ward might become successful. But in the end we returned to the Packers and politics.

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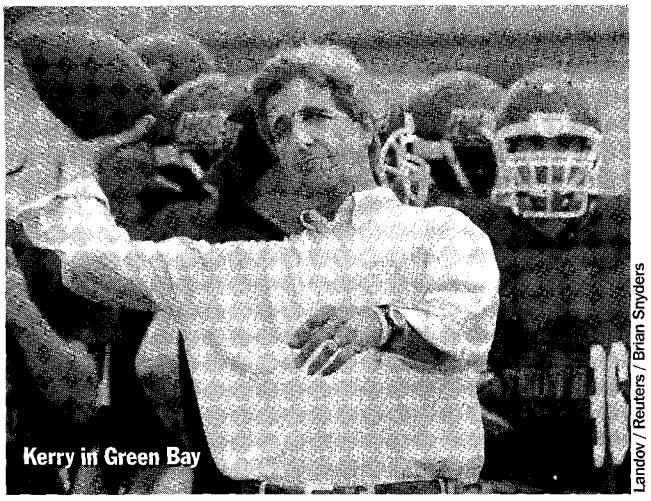
Kerry in Green Bay

Landov / Reuters / Brian Snyders

ME: *If Favre endorsed one candidate or the other, do you think it matters?*

WARD: *It would carry the state.*

ME: *You think it would?*

WARD: *I know it would.*

ME: *Who would he support?*

WARD: *I don't know Brett Favre personally, but a good friend that I hung with every year knows Jeff Favre, his brother. They're huge into hunting. They like their guns, and I'm sure Brett likes his money. So I would say like 8-out-of-10—I don't know Brett personally—but there's an 80 percent chance he's definitely Republican. And if he were to say it, it would definitely carry the state.*

Assuming Brett Favre doesn't endorse anyone, Wisconsin will likely see an unprecedented level of political activity in the next two months. "After Labor Day, you won't see a new car ad for six weeks," says Keith Schmitz, a grassroots activist and Kerry supporter from the Milwaukee suburb of Shorewood. Wisconsinites have already been inundated with ads, phone calls, and candidate visits. Bush has been to the state 13 times as president. Of his 7 campaign bus trips, 3 have taken him to Wisconsin. John Edwards toured the state early last week. Kerry's ill-fated trip to Green Bay came just two days after Edwards left the state. The Democratic National Committee launched its first television ad of the 2004 campaign in Madison . . . in July 2003.

Outside groups have also been as active in Wisconsin as they have in any state. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth chose the state in their targeted rollout of ads attacking John Kerry. The Progress for America Voter Fund, another "527" group, released the first of its anti-Kerry ads last Wednesday in just two states—Iowa and Wisconsin. Anti-Bush groups such as *MoveOn.org* and the Media Fund have spent considerable sums trashing the president in the state.

This saturation will not be limited to ads, or "paid media," but will also include the free media generated by news coverage. Democratic strategists say the Kerry campaign plans to have events featuring the candidates or prominent surrogates almost daily in Wisconsin from Labor Day through the November 2 election.

The reason for all of this attention is simple. Wisconsin, according to *Hotline* editor-in-chief Chuck Todd, is "the swingiest of all the swing states."

Al Gore won Wisconsin by 5,708 votes in 2000—47.8 percent to 47.6 percent. (Ralph Nader won 94,070 votes—4 percent.) Republicans think the margin was closer. "There were dozens of reports of malfeasance in Milwaukee County," says Rep. Paul Ryan, co-chairman of the Bush campaign in Wisconsin. "Lots of people think it was stolen from Bush in 2000."

For months polls have shown the race to be dead even, with most of the results within the margin of error. A poll published Friday by the *Los Angeles Times* shows that little has changed. Bush leads Kerry 45 percent to 44 percent, with Ralph Nader at 3 percent. The margin of error is 3 percentage points.

This down-the-middle split manifests itself in the state's political leadership: While both of Wisconsin's senators are Democrats, the House delegation is split evenly, 4-4. Governor Jim Doyle is a Democrat, but Republicans control both branches of the state legislature.

In a typical election year a Democratic presidential campaign would likely dismiss or altogether ignore an interview request from a weekly agricultural newspaper with a readership of just 25,000. This is not, of course, a typical election year. And the publication in question happens to be located in western Wisconsin—one of the few rural areas where Al Gore ran well in 2000. The Kerry campaign is hoping to build on that success.

So not only did John Kerry give an interview to Scott Schultz, managing editor of *The Country Today*, but Kerry's campaign solicited the coverage. "The Kerry campaign was the one who contacted me," says Schultz, in an email. "They said they were interested in getting their message out to the rural population and asked whether I'd be interested in having 15 minutes or so one-on-one via telephone while the senator was traveling."

Kerry spoke with Schultz on June 23, 2004. One week later, in its issue dated June 30, 2004, *The Country Today* broke news that would be especially significant to its readership. "Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry said that if he's elected, he'd no longer support special regional dairy pricing programs that some Wisconsin and Minnesota farm leaders have opposed. Sen. Kerry had supported the Northeast Dairy Compact, which Upper Midwest dairy

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leaders said unfairly benefited Northeast dairy producers."

Two days later, on July 2, Kerry addressed a large rally at a dairy farm in Independence, Wisconsin. "I plead guilty. I did vote for the compact as a representative of farmers in Massachusetts," he explained. "I'm going to stand up for farmers in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa just as hard as I did for the farmers in Massachusetts." The crowd roared its approval.

It was an admirable and refreshing moment of candor. But it was still a flip-flop. And whatever good the careful planning and straight talk might have done was quickly undone by the candidate's awkward attempt to transform himself from John Forbes Kerry to Farmer John.

"Let me tell you something: When I was a kid, this 'kid from the East' had an aunt and uncle who had a dairy farm, and one of my greatest joys in life in fact, I lived on a farm as a young kid. My parents, when we lived in Massachusetts, we lived on a farm, and I learned my first cuss word sitting on a tractor with the guy who was driving it."

Kerry continued shoveling.

"When I was 12 years old, my passion was being allowed to go out and sit on the John Deere and drive it around the field and plow, and I learned, as a kid, what it was like to look in back of me and see those furrows, and see that pattern, and feel a sense of accomplishment, and end up dusty and dirty and tired but feeling great, looking back at that field that you plowed."

Those are Kerry's words that day, as recorded in the July 4, 2004, *Boston Globe*. According to the same article, Kerry spokesman Stephanie Cutter explained Kerry's farm days this way: Cutter "said Kerry was referring to two farm experiences, one when he and his parents lived on a farm in Millis, Mass., and later when he frequented a dairy farm straddling the Ipswich/Hamilton border that was owned by his aunt and uncle. The first farm was where Kerry rode a tractor with a hand who worked the family's property. At the dairy farm, he tilled the land himself. At the time, Kerry's parents lived in Europe and he attended boarding school in Switzerland, but he returned to Massachusetts on vacations, Cutter said."

Bush's most recent trip to Wisconsin came on August 18. He began with a rally in Chippewa Falls, home to the legendary Leinenkugel's brewery. Of the four Wisconsin towns Bush visited that day, Chippewa Falls—population 12,924—was the largest.

Locals lined the streets to see the president, or at least his motorcade. Veterans saluted. Wheelchair-bound nursing home residents were wheeled out to the curb. Kids waved American flags. One burly man held a large sign with silver, duct-tape letters: "Mr. President—Let's Roll. Victory 2004." But not all of the signs were friendly. "Dick is a Dick," read one, presumably referring to Cheney, not Gephardt.

The presidential visit clearly strained the resources of the community. In Chippewa Falls, squad cars blocked the streets for Bush's motorcade. But the local police ran out of cars. A dark green pickup truck with "Chippewa Falls Animal Control" written on its side blocked one street, a bright orange garbage truck sealed off another. Further down the highway, a patrol boat from the Chippewa County Sheriff's Department obstructed traffic as six motorcoaches—two red-white-and-blue Bush-Cheney buses and four for the press—cruised by.

Bush's speech in Chippewa Falls varied little from his standard stump speech. He ticked off the accomplishments of his first term and goals for a second. He cracked a few jokes, thanked the local politicians, and reminded Wisconsin Republicans that he thinks his wife is doing a terrific job as First Lady.

Midway through the speech, Bush sarcastically referred to John Kerry's tortured explanation of his vote against the $87 billion to fund troops in Iraq. "When asked about why, he said, well, he actually did vote for the $87 billion right before he voted against it," Bush explained. "I don't think people talk like that here."

Bush uses that line wherever he gives the speech—Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Mexico. But it is particularly effective in Wisconsin, which has a long tradition of favoring plainspoken elected officials. (Think Robert LaFollette and Joe McCarthy.)

"The death-knell for a Democrat in Wisconsin is to be a flip-flopper," says Rep. Ryan, a conservative from Janesville. "The credibility issue for John Kerry is his biggest liability."

"In Wisconsin, people will vote for you if you're consistent," he adds, citing the voters he shared with Ralph Nader in 2000 as evidence. "That's why you get liberals like Russ Feingold, who is certainly to the left of the voters here, getting reelected."

But there's a downside to consistency: stubbornness. Ron Kind, a Democrat from La Crosse who represents Wisconsin's third congressional district, believes Bush is vulnerable because "people are unhappy with the direction of the country. You can't discount that motivation."

The Bush supporters I met at Lambeau Field will have a tough decision to make three days before the election. That's when their beloved Packers—okay, *our* beloved Packers—travel to Washington, D.C., to play the Redskins. According to the *Hotline*'s Chuck Todd, a noted Packers fan, "If the Redskins lose or tie in their last game before the election, the incumbent's party loses the White House." How long has that superstition held true? For the last 72 years—or 18 presidential elections.

Go Packers? ♦

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Europe's Iran Fantasy

Europeans are from Venus, Mullahs are from Mars.

By Leon de Winter

Amsterdam

On October 22, 2003, the *Guardian*, a leading British newspaper, carried no fewer than three articles about the remarkable events in Tehran the day before. The foreign ministers of the three leading European Union countries—Britain's Jack Straw, France's Dominique de Villepin, and Germany's Joschka Fischer—had flown to Iran to try to persuade its Shiite leaders to conclude an agreement about Iran's nuclear program.

The first was a news story, under the headline, "E.U. ministers strike Iran deal." The lead began, "Three European foreign ministers claimed a diplomatic coup yesterday, securing an agreement from Iran over its nuclear program which could defuse a brewing crisis with the U.S." Central to the agreement was a commitment "to suspend [Iran's] uranium-enrichment and reprocessing activities"—in other words, to halt production of materials for nuclear weapons.

The second article was by *Guardian* commentator Ian Black, who wrote: "The agreement marks a significant victory for the European Union's policy of 'conditional engagement' and the use of carrots and sticks, in contrast to threats from the United States against the Islamic republic, part of President George Bush's 'axis of evil.' . . . 'We often find ourselves on the defensive, being told we are appeasers for engaging with regimes like this,' an E.U. diplomat said last night. 'This agreement gives the lie to that argument. Clearly the Iranians did not do this because they feared E.U. military action. They did it because they want a relationship with us and want to keep channels open.'"

The *Guardian*'s third piece about this triumph of European diplomacy opened as follows: "Iran's agreement to allow unlimited U.N. inspections of its nuclear facilities and to suspend its uranium enrichment program marks a tremendous success for European diplomacy. . . . Mr. Straw played down the significance of the achievement. He should not be so modest. . . . Iran will doubtless remain an axis-of-evil rogue state in George Bush's florid lexicon. But Washington must not try to undermine this accord. To date, [Washington's] polarizing, aggressive pressure tactics have mostly made a difficult problem worse. Europe demonstrated yesterday that there is a different, more effective way. And it is not the American way."

These articles were typical of those then appearing in the European press about the success of European soft power. Few commentators could resist the opportunity to malign Bush, even though many realized that Iran had no intention of adhering to the agreement. The warnings and reports by the International Atomic Energy Association, then and since, make it clear: Everything that happened on that fall day in Tehran was fiction and deception. Yet Europe's leading politicians chose to deceive and debase themselves rather than recognize Iran's play-acting for what it was. For them, the illusion of soft power was infinitely preferable to the suggestion that they should be prepared to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power *at all costs*. The Iranians knew perfectly well that the Europeans would not back up their demands with force—the only language tyrants building nuclear arsenals understand. The mullahs are quite familiar with Europe: The life-loving Europeans of the third millennium would never have sent their children into the minefields of Iraq.

All but a handful of Europe's politicians, obsessed by the specter of electoral defeat, refuse to take a stand if

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doing so could force them to sacrifice lives. Post-historical and post-religious Europe, born in the shadow of the Holocaust, does not see sacrifice as legitimate. Of course, considering that Europe has nurtured some of the world's cruelest ideologies, the dread of scenarios that might require sacrifice is hardly surprising. The problem is that much of the world, especially the Arab Islamic parts of it, is simply not interested in the moral and ethical implications of Europe's bloody past.

Since Auschwitz—the benchmark of ideological and political developments in Europe—the miracle of European prosperity and freedom has not led to the conviction that this prosperity and freedom must be defended, if necessary by force; on the contrary, the miracle has given birth to an attitude of cultural relativism and pacifism. It is as if modern Europe had divested itself of its idealistic and historical context, as if many Europeans saw the miracle of a prosperous and free Europe as an ahistorical, natural, and permanent state of affairs—as if Auschwitz had been wiped from their memory.

But anyone who is ignorant of, or ignores, the fact that tens of millions of Europeans died in the twentieth century in the struggle between good and evil—and it seems most Europeans have simply *forgotten* this—will fail to appreciate that the continued existence of Europe's system of liberal moral and ethical values is the result of conscious choices by courageous Europeans (and many others).

The memorials to the millions who died stand for a faraway world that today's European, safe in his postmodern cultural relativism, thinks he has long since left behind: a world as distant as the Ice Age.

It may be something worse than amnesia: Today's Europeans may see the history of the twentieth century as scarred only by an abstract process known by the ancient Germanic word "war," a concept that for them represents some monstrous destructive force beyond good and evil that blindly spews out victims, like a flood or a hurricane. Most Europeans no longer regard Auschwitz as the disastrous result of evil ideas and the evil decisions of human beings. Instead, they see it as the consequence of something more like a natural disaster.

Perfectly expressing this concept of war were the huge demonstrations in Europe against the war in Iraq. In these rituals, the term "war" was taken out of its historical, political, and cultural context, and no justification for fighting was deemed acceptable. The high priest of this antihistorical creed is Michael Moore, who, 59 years after the end of the Second World War, in a discussion with TV talk show host Bill O'Reilly, would not state categorically that only a devastating war could have saved Europe from something far worse, namely Nazism. By these lights, war is bad whatever the historical or political circumstances.

Another manifestation of the same kind of thinking is the antihistorical view of the suffering caused by the Allied bombing of Nazi Germany: Germans increasingly see themselves as victims of "the war," as if the conflict were not a consequence of the German people's national obsessions with race and purity. A recent German novel about the Allied bombing enjoyed a *succès de scandale* because it purposely left out any reference to historical context. Everyone is a victim in war, was the message, and the difference between good and evil disappears when the dogs of war are unleashed. "Ordinary Germans" were victims too.

The European landscape is littered from north to south and east to west with monuments to battles and massacres. Many of them commemorate distant conflicts that now are hard to understand, but some mark the struggle against the most recent European evils: the right-wing totalitarian fascism of Nazi Germany and the left-wing totalitarian fascism of the Soviet Union. Although carved in stone, their lessons have not been learned. For most Europeans, the monuments no longer speak to Western civilization of the essential choice between good and evil. Instead, the memorials to the millions who died, from American soldiers to murdered civilians, stand for a faraway world that today's European, safe in his postmodern cultural relativism, thinks he has long since left behind: a world as distant as the Ice Age, plagued by an abstract phenomenon called "war."

It was only logical, therefore, that the implosion of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, which threatened to generate yet more massacres and monuments, left Europe paralyzed. Europe had to bring an end to the mass killings of Europeans by other Europeans in the Balkans, but it lacked the ability *to take the necessary action*. For that, Europe needed the detested United States.

Of course the horrors of war are beyond comparison, and it is a mark of civilization to deploy military force only with extreme caution. But most Europeans no longer realize that to avoid taking a path that may in the end lead to violent conflict—to avoid opposing totalitarian ideologies—can result in even greater suffering and

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AFP Photo / Atta Kenare

Dominique de Villepin and Jack Straw greet President Khatami in Tehran, October 21, 2003.

more casualties. Today's Europeans seem unable to accept the idea that bowing to tyranny is sometimes worse than going to war to resist it. Indeed, to judge from the way European appeasers have handled the threat of a potential Iranian nuclear bomb, it seems that Europe would rather accept its own demise than sacrifice its sons to the dogs of war, which make no distinction between good and evil.

Last month the Brookings Institution hosted a conference of former American and European politicians and bureaucrats on the danger of the Shiite bomb. *Newsweek* quoted Madeleine Albright as commenting: "Europeans say they understand the threat but then act as if the real problem is not Iran but the United States."

It is remarkable that current developments in Iran do not dominate our headlines. The media are obsessed by Abu Ghraib, by those "liars" Sharon and Bush, by Halliburton and the neocons. And their obsession extends to conspiracy theories, although they fail to realize that something must be wrong when a radical pacifist like Michael Moore can receive the best film award at Cannes from Quentin Tarantino, a man who has done more than anyone to glamorize violence. In the meantime, a terrifying danger looms on the horizon, set to transform the geopolitical map of the Middle East within two years and so the map of the entire world: the Iranian nuclear bomb.

The mullahs are quite frank about why they want nuclear weapons. On December 14, 2001, the *de facto* dictator of Iran, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, spelled out his dream in a sermon at Tehran University. "If one day the world of Islam comes to possess the [nuclear] weapons currently in Israel's possession," Rafsanjani said, "on that day this method of global arrogance would come to a dead end." This, he said, is because the use of a nuclear bomb on Israel would entirely demolish the Jewish state, whereas it would only damage the Islamic world. Iran's leaders have made dozens of similar statements.

Last week Israel's senior commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*: "There is an impression that Iran has no fears of any United Nations Security Council action. If its audacity succeeds, Iran will gain another period of unhindered nuclear development. Even though the Iranians have been caught out in the lies they have been weaving for 18 years, it is possible the ayatollahs' regime in Tehran believes that time is on their side."

What happened in Tehran on October 21, 2003, was not proof of the viability of soft power, but the opposite—proof of its impotence. The *Guardian* and the rest of the European media were fooling themselves and us, blinded by their hatred of Bush's hard power. "Washington sought to persuade Western allies to take a tougher line on Iran," *Haaretz* wrote last week, concluding dryly, "But Britain, Germany, and France say they prefer to try and persuade Tehran to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency." They never learn. ♦

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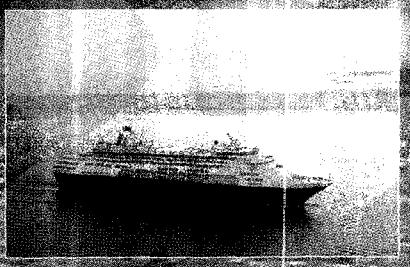

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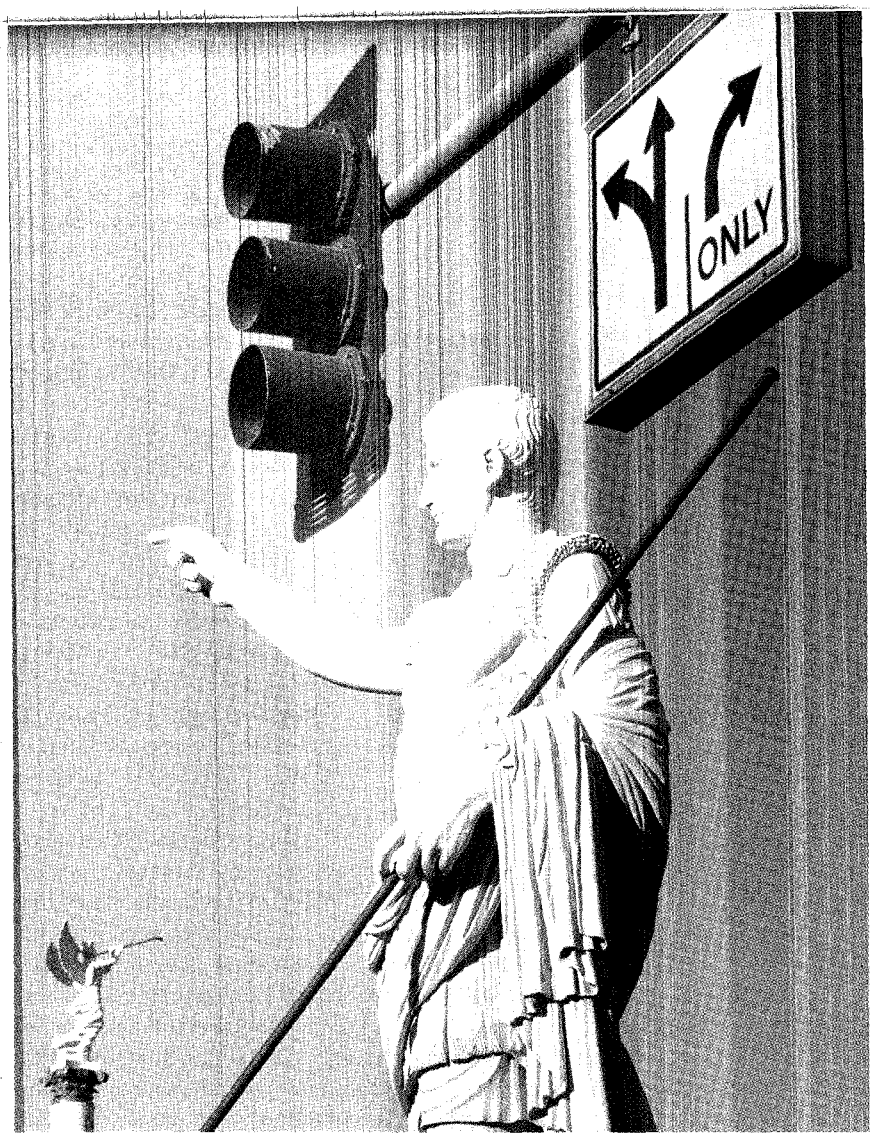
The Way It Wasn't

How what-if history grew from a minor literary curiosity to a bestselling genre of popular fiction

By **Gregory Feeley**



B.S.P.I. / CORBIS

Part fiction, part historical speculation, the publishing genre known as "alternate history" is a literary chimera—a seeming anomaly that is perfectly in sync with its time. Popularized by the Edwardians, alternate history pottered along for decades, mostly as a literary curiosity, before roaring to life in the 1990s, just in time for a century to which it seems peculiarly suited.

In form, alternate history draws upon the genres of science fiction and fantasy, historical novels and adventure stories, even technothrillers and mysteries—something from just about every contemporary publishing category, except "literature." It hasn't often broken into movies (explaining the setup seems inescapably to involve one step too many), but it has established itself not only on superstore bookshelves but in the popular consciousness.

Alternate history—in its early days, it was known as "counterfactual history"—first appeared in recognizable form not in fiction but as an exercise in popular essay-writing by genuine historians. The publication of G.M. Trevelyan's essay "If Napoleon Had Won the Battle of Waterloo" in 1907 is usually cited as the tradition's starting point, and Trevelyan certainly served as the inspiration for the 1931 anthology edited by J.C. Squire, *If It Had Happened Otherwise*, with essays by G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, A.J.P. Taylor, Winston Churchill, and others. The piece's titles—"If the Moors in Spain Had Won," "If Louis XVI Had an Atom of Firmness," "If Byron Had Become King of Greece," and so on (Churchill, with some wit, contributed "If Lee Had Not Won the Battle of Gettysburg")—made clear that while "counterfactuals" might consider any possible variation in history, their appeal lay in imagining the different outcomes of important military campaigns. The frisson of political foreboding, with a dash of sensationalism, was present from the first.

But while Squire's volume was popular, the tradition goes back earlier. Trevelyan may well have seen the series of "Reviews of Unwritten Books," cowritten by the British eccentric Baron Corvo and published in the *Monthly Review* in 1903, which similarly toyed with history, and included a discussion of "Machiavelli's *Dispatches from the South African Campaign*." A year earlier, an American novelist named Charles Felton Pidgin published *The Climax; or, What Might Have Been: A Romance of the Great Republic*, which detailed the century of history following Aaron Burr's election as governor of New York and unbroken, duel-free climb to political power. This is alternate history in its purest form, although many of its elements can be glimpsed in a number of popular novels published in the United States, England, and France from the mid-nineteenth century (the 1836 *Napoléon et la conquête du monde, 1812-1823* seems to be the first) and increasing in number in the 1880s.

Gregory Feeley is a widely published science-fiction author and critic.

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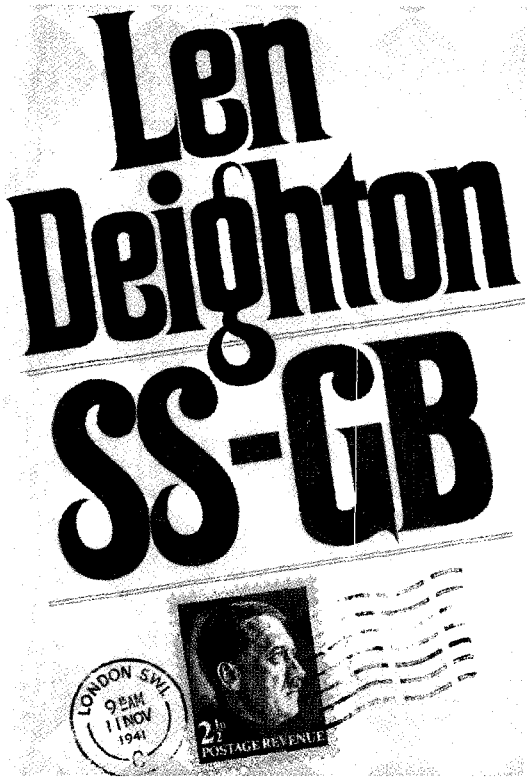

None of this was regarded as serious literature or serious history, and most works of alternate history (no one seems to know when the term was coined) enjoyed brief shelf lives, reflecting as they did the anxieties of their own immediate era. Their staple theme continued to be the triumph of one of history's bugbears, with Hitler (who soon replaced Napoleon) and Robert E. Lee becoming by far the most popular. The frisson remained marketable (in 1960 *Look* magazine commissioned two essays by well-known popular historians to explore imagined Nazi and Confederate victories). But by the 1950s alternate history was largely confined to science fiction, which explored the possible themes in the genre's usual straightforward and rationalist manner. L. Sprague de Camp's 1939 *Lest Darkness Fall*, in which an American cast back to the sixth century A.D. attempts to prevent the onset of the Dark Ages, was an early and influential example.

These books were frequently engaging, and some of them, such as Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and Keith Roberts's *Pavane* (1968), possessed considerable artistry. But the ingenuity science-fiction writers lavished on their reconfigured histories was often naive, and their stories remained a distinctly local product.

The number of alternate histories published in science fiction nonetheless grew steadily through the 1970s and 1980s. A few examples appeared in the commercial mainstream, including *The Court Martial of George Armstrong Custer* by the well-regarded historical novelist Douglas C. Jones in 1976 (an early example of what would prove a salient commercial strategy: putting a famous historical figure in circumstances diametrically at odds with his historical fate) and Thomas Berger's 1989 *Changing the Past*. These books tended to present the concept of a novelist's changing history as itself a striking idea—which is an indication of how modestly the popular articles and genre fiction had penetrated general public awareness.

One can see this in the 1980 film *The Final Countdown*, which transports a present-day battleship, by some storm-induced time warp, into the Pacific a few days before Pearl Harbor. The crew is startled to realize that they can shoot down the Japanese attack and alter the course of history, and the audience is invited to be equally startled by the idea. In the film, a second storm takes the boat back before the sailors can act, which renders the disconcerting possibilities moot. Such an approach was typical of the time: The implication of alternate history—the foundation-dissolving notion of an unfixed past—was quickly followed by a retreat in the end to a reaffirmed status quo.

This changed abruptly in the early 1990s. The year 1992 saw publication of *Fatherland* by Robert Harris, an international bestseller, and Harry Turtledove's *The Guns of the South*, which has sold 350,000 copies over the past dozen years. Three years later Newt Gingrich and William Forstchen published *1945*, which posits that Hitler was lying in a coma in December 1941, and so could not declare war on the United States.

All these novels were marketed to a much broader audience than had ever read alternate history before. Unsurprisingly, they all stick to simple deviations at well-known points of history—to the big two, in fact: Nazi Germany and the American Confederacy. *Fatherland* posits a victorious Third Reich, while *1945* dramatizes a World War II in which America's crucially delayed entry allowed a threatening series of Nazi developments.

Turtledove, whose early ventures in the genre were informed by his love of the ancient world (he has a Ph.D. in Byzantine history), turned to a less recondite setting with *The Guns of the South*, which relates with a straight face what happens when a rogue pack of time-traveling South Africans gives Robert E. Lee all the AK-47s he can use. The quintessential novel for the armchair historian who likes to imagine how his favorite war would have played out had the losing side been equipped with contemporary weaponry, *The Guns of the South* reached beyond the established genre audience to tap into the very large body of Civil War enthusiasts.

Since then, alternate histories have flourished, with their own genre prize, the Sidewise Award, and dozens of novels and anthologies every year. And they now appear poised to break into the literary mainstream. Philip Roth is about to publish *The Plot Against America*, in which Charles Lindbergh defeats Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election: the first novel of forthright alternate history to be written by an American of high literary reputation. Michael Chabon is said to be readying another for publication next year.

Meanwhile, Gingrich and Forstchen are back, with the first two volumes of a trilogy about the South threatening to win the Civil War, and Peter G. Tsouras, a military think-tank analyst in Virginia, has just published *Dixie Victorious*, the latest in a series of

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historical speculations that include *Third Reich Victorious*, *Rising Sun Victorious*, and so on.

The historical novel in English, a nineteenth-century innovation, was judged in good part by the accuracy of its imaginative evocation: However attractive the edifice the novelist raised—and it was practiced by the likes of Sir Walter Scott, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Charles Dickens—the novel was thought unsound by the reading public if its historical basis was faulty. Even after the historical novel ceased (for various reasons) to be a candidate for "serious" literature and was demoted to the demimonde of popular "entertainment," the rules persisted: Lack of fidelity to the historical record was a flaw, excusable in Shakespeare but not in modern writers. The past was knowable, and one got it either right or wrong.

Old-fashioned writers of historical fiction were often attracted to the imaginative possibilities of what we would now call alternate history, but they also mistrusted it. Nathaniel Hawthorne justified his dramatization of Byron and Shelley living into old age in his 1845 story "P.'s Correspondence" by introducing a frame device that made his text the writings of a madman, and H.G. Wells explained away the alternate history of his 1905 *A Modern Utopia* by claiming that the story took place on a planet just like Earth but "beyond Sirius." The Modernists who followed the Victorians knew historical fiction to be, like fantasy and ghost stories, unsuited to serious literature.

Postmodernism's willingness to entertain notions that Victorian and Modernist alike would have frowned upon has given contemporary novelists almost complete freedom over their subject matter. The past is no longer fixed like cement: It can be played with. John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* was, in 1969, the first historical novel in decades to be taken seriously as a work of literature, and by no coincidence, it exhibited a full set of what we now call postmodern characteristics.

But postmodernism is not the only element in the emergence of alternate history. The pressures of modern publishing have also helped, as alternate histories lend themselves almost uniquely well to what publishers call "high concept." The central idea behind most alternate histories is so straightforward as to be iconic—sometimes conveyed in the title, but often reducible to a single image, which publishers have been happy to employ. An early instance was Knopf's memorable dust jacket for Len Deighton's 1978 *SS-GB*, which showed, with perfect economy and clarity, a British postage stamp with Hitler's visage upon it, postmarked late 1941.

Such a potent design strategy had always been clear to science-fiction publishers. A 1976 reprint of *Lest Darkness Fall* shows a modern American male instructing Roman soldiers in the use of a catapult, an image prospective buyers could understand instantly. Since then, the high-concept cover has dominated alternate history. All editions of *The Guns of the South* show Robert E. Lee with a machine gun in his hand, and a series of anthologies edited in the mid-1990s by Mike Resnick (I should note that I contributed to a few of them) bore covers that wittily epitomized the volume's central conceit. The best of them, *Alternate Presidents*, shows the 1948 Republican presidential candidate jubilantly displaying a newspaper whose headline reads "Truman Defeats Dewey."

This is the appeal of the high concept: You can package it in a phrase or a single striking image. And no story is better suited to high-concept treatment than alternate history. Suppose that Charles Babbage had actually completed his Difference Engine and unleashed the Information Age on pre-Victorian England—as a Hollywood producer would say, *That's high concept.*

Writers of alternate history would bristle at the suggestion that they conceive their novels around the envisioned cover designs. But it is fair to suggest that the vivid, compressed, and electrically intense experience—the preview that gives you a speeded-up miniature of the entire movie, the three-minute drama on MTV—is popular today for the same reasons alternate history is popular: They offer not moments recollected in tranquility, but a rush.

But there's more to the success of alternate history, for it is also a surprisingly adaptable genre. A children's book can be alternate history, and so can a mystery, or a spy novel, or even a romance. Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* is plainly alternate history—the setting is a 1985 in which the Crimean War has raged for 130 years—but it is also a detective novel, and a fantasy as well (the protagonist must investigate the kidnapping of Jane Eyre from the confines of her novel).

The loss of literature's sense of high mission has also helped alternate history. The novel has been wriggling free of its old moral prescriptions for the

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THIRD REICH VICTORIOUS

Alternate Decisions of World War II

EDITED BY PETER G. TSOURAS

past hundred years, and cultural critics still willing to judge literature by how well it embodies Matthew Arnold's "grandeur of spirit" or F.R. Leavis's "maturity" are a dwindling rear guard. Once you accept that alternate history is not merely moral laxness about getting the facts right, you can enjoy the imaginative freedom it affords. One problem in reading, say, Frederick Forsyth's 1971 *The Day of the Jackal* (a thriller about an assassin stalking Charles De Gaulle) is that you know how it has to end. In alternate history, you don't.

And who will deny that a vision of mechanical computers, unwieldy but still revolutionary, spreading across pre-Victorian England and disrupting its social institutions, can be imaginatively exciting?

And yet, alternate history—not simply a narrative set in a contemporary world that contains some fantastical element, like the hidden magical community in Harry Potter or the sorcerous nineteenth century of Susanna Clarke's just-published *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Morrell*, but one in which some crucial past event happened differently and subsequent history carved a different course—has an appeal that is not always pretty.

Most alternate histories are tales of battles with new endings, and there is something disturbing in the multivolume alternate history (a recent development, now immensely popular) that allows Civil War strategists and World War II buffs to follow extended variations of their favorite campaigns. Alternate history's emphasis on replaying the outcomes of wars—almost invariably the coffee-table favorites—seems to take the history of armed conflict, that inexpungeable mural of human misery, and reduce it to something like a board game.

The scenario known as "Hitler Wins" was sufficiently well established to have its own entry in the 1992 edition of the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, where editor John Clute could write that "Half a century after WWII, new Hitler-wins stories are less common." Within a few years, Clute's statement was no longer true, and recent years have seen an upsurge of stories about the Nazi triumph—as well as stories in which Nazism never arose, but something enticingly like it did, only worse.

Presumably those who relish such stories do not actually wish to see the political developments they enjoy reading about, just as those who love violent computer games are not usually sociopaths. But the readiness of alternate history to purvey straightforward wish-fulfillment is one of its abiding features, and it is evident when the genre presents a less morbid and more patriotic cast.

The Final Countdown balked at facing its implications and becoming alternate history, but it did pause to savor one of the genre's characteristic pleasures: the reflection that United States brain and firepower could do some serious conquering if granted access to the past. I don't understand how contemplation of this thesis—at once inarguable and fatuous—can gratify so many readers, but the books are on the bookstore shelves, fat volumes with sequels beside them, often with covers showing anachronistic battle scenes in which an American flag is prominent.

Harry Turtledove followed up the success of *The Guns of the South* with a pair of astonishingly protracted alternate-history series, one about a Southern victory in the Civil War (which leads in later decades to further wars, each accorded its own trilogy) and a Hitler-wins variant in which World War II is interrupted in 1942 by an invasion of—I'm sorry to say—aliens from outer space, a race of regimented and bureaucratically hidebound reptiles. The militarily powerful but rather obtuse lizards force the warring humans into an alliance that allows the Nazis to survive for decades as repeated man-vs.-alien battles are played out. Projected to run to eight volumes (seven have so far appeared), this preposterous series avoids being offensive only by its silliness.

When a story of mine, published in one of Resnick's anthologies, was nominated for an award, I composed a few paragraphs in which I lamented the genre's "morally objectionable nature," which ended up annoying several colleagues. For its proponents, alternate history offers the opportunity to conduct "thought experiments" concerning human nature and the workings of history. But such a high-minded enterprise doesn't really describe tales of giant lizards interrupting World War II, or modern cities being flung by comic mishap into the seventeenth century to change the course of the Thirty Years' War (another popular series, devised by Eric Flint and currently being elaborated by several writers).

In any event, both genre and mainstream publishers continue to invest in alternate history. Today's mail brought a copy of Harry Turtledove's *Settling Accounts: Return Engagement*, 623 pages

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of detailed alternate history, the eighth volume of a ten-book series about eighty years of Yankee-Confederate warfare. And earlier this month came *The Rebel* by Jack Dann, subtitled "An Imagined Life of James Dean," in which the famous actor survives his car crash and lives through the 1960s, getting involved with Marilyn Monroe, the Kennedys, and other prominent figures of the time (an abiding interest of alternate history is to portray famous people encountering and reencountering each other even when the events that made them famous have been radically altered). While much alternate history is still produced by authors of military science fiction—writers whose response to the word "postmodern" is a growl—*The Rebel* caters to liberal pieties: James Dean exorcises his demons and discovers his social conscience, defeats Reagan to become governor of California in 1966, and two years later dies saving Bobby Kennedy.

All of this is not to say there aren't some good works out there—although the finest alternate history novel I have read in the past dozen years, Christopher Priest's *The Separation*, has not yet found a publisher in America, and another remarkable one, Martin J. Gidron's *The Severed Wing*, was published only by a small university press. Some of the short stories in the genre are particularly enjoyable.

Steven Utley and Howard Waldrop's 1976 novelette "Custer's Last Jump," for example, retells the Battle of Little Big Horn, when Crazy Horse's Krupp-built monoplanes destroyed the dirigibles that carried General Custer's 7th Cavalry and 505th Balloon Infantry. "Custer's Last Jump" contains most of the genre's subsequent signature characteristics—the gonzo conceit, the tells-it-all title, the famous personages (among the narrative sources are interview notes from Mark Twain's unwritten *Huckleberry Among the Hostiles*)—and may well be responsible for many of them. It nonetheless manages, in its odd juxtaposition of high spirits, funhouse-mirror reflection of American history, and a haunting summoning of almost-real voices, to turn a clever notion into something strange and finally moving.

The tension between imaginative free play and the moral imagination comes sharply into focus in the compressed and ebullient "Mozart in Mirrorshades" by Bruce Sterling and Lewis Shiner, which vividly dramatizes a mid-1770s Europe that has been colonized by a time-traveling future intent on exploiting its oil resources. While troubled plant managers fret over the civilization whose natural resources and cultural treasures they are looting, the teenaged Mozart—resplendent in buzz cut and silvered sunglasses, entranced by twenty-first-century technology and not particularly interested in composing symphonies he can hear on tape anyway—ecstatically embraces the future world. The story offers all the glitz and dissonance of alternate history, but without the peepshow voyeurism.

In many respects Sterling and Shiner's story presages *The Difference Engine*, the celebrated novel that Sterling wrote with William Gibson (yes, science-fiction writers collaborate a lot—they're as bad as minor Elizabethan playwrights) that dramatizes Babbage's exhilarating yet sinister revolution. It is a novel that takes every imaginative gaud, holds it up for our enjoyment, and then shows us the cost that it brings. It is a far cry from the moral disingenuousness of so much alternate history, in which one scene of outlandish bloodletting leads merely to another.

If there is something troubling about the current vogue for alternate history, it does not lie exactly in the form itself or with any specific subject matter. But its defining tropes and conventions are the occasion for readers to retell to themselves their own favored stories, reinforcing personal narratives rather than finding in a text something new. The ethical imperatives of reading cannot be itemized, but one of them is certainly the obligation to acknowledge the real world that—in however complex and mediated a manner—profoundly informs even the most fantastical text. Alternate history, for all its pleasures, invariably brings with it the temptation to do otherwise. ♦

The Vanity of *Vanity*

Thackeray's Vanity Fair *comes to the silver screen—kind of.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

"Stars will not play weak and they will not play blemished," William Goldman wrote in his seminal 1983 book, *Adventures in the Screen Trade*. "Try asking a major star to play a *real* Mafia head, a man who makes his living off whores and child pornography, heroin and blood; sorry folks, those parts go to the character actors, or the has-beens."

Goldman wrote those words before it became fashionable for certain movie stars to take the part of a super-villain every now and then, just to mix it up a bit. But for some, Goldman's rule still applies. Case in point: Reese Witherspoon.

Witherspoon was more than willing in her pre-stardom days to play a social-climbing, power-hungry adventuress in a brilliant 1999 high school satire called *Election*. Her character, Tracy Flick, will do or say just about anything to become class president. *Election* was a critical success but a box-office flop. Witherspoon would only emerge as a bona-fide Hollywood star two years later as the title character in

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Focus Features

Reese Witherspoon as Becky Sharp in Vanity Fair.

a wretched crowd-pleaser called *Legally Blonde*, which made $140 million worldwide at the box office.

Now Witherspoon is "bankable," which means she can get movies made that otherwise nobody would think of spending good money on. Such is the case with her latest film, a cinematic rendering of William Makepeace Thackeray's classic Victorian novel, the 1847 *Vanity Fair*. The movie would never have seen the light of day without Witherspoon's name above the title.

You might think Witherspoon was born to play *Vanity Fair*'s protagonist, Becky Sharp. She matches almost exactly Thackeray's description of Becky as "small and slight in person, pale, sandy-haired," with "very large, odd and attractive" eyes. (She is an American, but she does a creditable English accent.) Witherspoon's mother called her "Little Miss Type A" when she was a child, a description that certainly fits Becky. And Becky is a logical role for the actress who so fearlessly limned the part of Tracy Flick in *Election*—for when it comes to soulless conniving, Tracy Flick has nothing on the most soulless conniver in the annals of literature.

In her risky and largely unsuccessful pursuit of social position and wealth, which Thackeray charts over the course of fifteen years, Becky lies, cheats, steals, beats up her own unloved child, destroys a marriage by philandering, and then finally secures herself an annuity by murdering an infirm lover. Yes, Becky Sharp is one juicy part, and Witherspoon knows it.

Unfortunately, Witherspoon is also a movie star of the old school, and as William Goldman said, movie stars "will not play weak and they will not play blemished." So, in this film version, Becky may be harsh, may be cruel, may be ambitious, but she is not a villain. Indeed, the movie ends not with Becky killing Joseph Sedley, but with Becky happily married to Joseph Sedley. We last see her happily riding on an elephant in India as friendly natives shower her with rose petals.

Thackeray may have ended his novel with some of the bleakest concluding sentences ever written: "Ah! *Vanitas vanitatum!* Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? Or, having it, is satisfied? Come, children, let us shut up the box and puppets, for our play is played out." But such bleakness simply won't do for Little Miss Type A, director Mira Nair, and a team of screenwriters that includes Julian Fellowes (who wrote *Gosford Park*). So they transmute the Machiavellian murderess into a happy bride enjoying the multicultural pleasures of the Raj. It's as if *Fatal Attraction* came to a close with a musical number.

Because Reese Witherspoon is a star—and not just a star, but a very young star with two young children and what is, by Hollywood standards, a marriage of long duration (five years)—her Becky doesn't box her son's ears or make jokes about how the boy will have to cry himself to sleep, as Thackeray's Becky does. Her Becky is no longer a faithless wife to her husband Rawdon, but is instead his little sex kitten. Her Becky isn't caught with her lover, the Marquis of Steyne, but is instead attempting to fight the older man off when her husband comes in and finds them together. Her Becky doesn't drip with contempt for Rawdon, but instead weeps in anguish when he leaves her. Her Becky no longer buys things on credit with no intention of paying for them; rather, she criticizes her husband for doing so.

"Attributes like ambition or desire were perceived as wicked then," Witherspoon says in the current issue of *Vanity Fair*, the magazine named for the book. "Now they're not. Becky is a survivor. She's definitely going to grasp every opportunity that comes her way." Director Nair echoes her star's words. "Becky is very resourceful, full of beans, and very much somebody who believes in life," Nair says. "I've tried to make her deeply human."

So did Thackeray try to "make her deeply human." The problem for the movie is that Thackeray's entire point was that humankind is all but worthless. We all reside in Vanity Fair, a low and detestable place powered by pretension and delusion—as Thackeray expected his readers to understand when he borrowed the title of *Vanity Fair* from the name of a particularly dismal town through which Christian passes in John Bunyan's 1678 *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Becky has value in her creator's eyes only because she never surrenders to the sentimental or pious illusions that afflict every other character in the novel, particularly her counterpart Amelia. Becky is a monster—but she knows it, and her self-knowledge

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makes her superior to those seemingly noble women in the novel who spend decades mourning husbands who didn't love them, or those seemingly noble men who spend decades pursuing silly women who are unworthy of their affections.

Though *Vanity Fair* is subtitled "A Novel Without a Hero," Thackeray does at one point allow Becky to "lay claim to a heroine," because she is "cool and collected in the presence of doubts and difficulties." That is what passes for heroism in Thackeray's eyes. His *Vanity Fair* is misogynistic, misanthropic, bitter, and ugly, an enduringly hateful book.

It is also endless, and it must be said that Nair and her team of screenwriters do an admirable job of condensing the book's plot into a fast-moving 137 minutes. But again there's a problem. The plot of *Vanity Fair* isn't the reason the book endures. It's standard-issue Victorian hash, overstuffed with unrequited love, unfortunate orphans, self-sacrificing mothers, harsh creditors, and wild coincidences. The characters, save for Becky, aren't especially memorable.

Indeed, if plot were all, *Vanity Fair* would be as little known today as *Headlong Hall* and *Gryll Grange*, two far funnier satires by Thomas Love Peacock that were published around the same time as Thackeray's book. No, people still read *Vanity Fair* 160 years after its publication because of Thackeray's essayistic and satiric interjections, which deconstruct his own novel even as he is unfolding it.

Perhaps the best example of this unusual quality can be found in Thackeray's treatment of Amelia Sedley, Becky's only friend. In a conventional Victorian novel, Amelia would be a creature of infinite glory, a wondrous example of self-denying womanhood—full of deep feeling and high sentiment, so kind and loving that she is even willing to surrender her beloved son to a rich relative to help provide for her own parents and to secure the boy's future. Dickens would have made of Amelia what he made of Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*: a creature on the cusp of womanhood, so brave and enduring that the only intelligent critical response is to fling the book across the room. Thackeray instead makes no bones of his opinion: Amelia is a silly, sentimental fool. She does nothing but lie to herself and cry. Thackeray cracks dozens of jokes at the expense of Amelia's tear ducts in the course of his book—even describing her in a startlingly modern fashion as having turned on "the waterworks."

Without Thackeray's bracing and vicious voice reminding us in extraordinarily clever but deeply distressing prose just how rotten everything is, *Vanity Fair* would be merely a boring and inconclusive tale about unhappy people who don't merit much attention being manipulated by a devious but clever woman. The movie tells the story well, but who could possibly care?

"I saw Becky as a kind of early feminist," Witherspoon says in her *Vanity Fair* magazine interview. With friends like Reese Witherspoon, who seem to think that women's lib includes murder and child-beating, feminists need no enemies. Nor does literature need friends like Reese Witherspoon, who think little of changing the meaning of great works of art to suit the demands of their stardom. ♦

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Parody

Democrats say Merrie Spaeth, a Dallas PR consultant who advised the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, has ties to President Bush. Among her other past clients has been "Barney the dinosaur . . . amid a licensing dispute with PBS."

—The Dallas Morning News, August 21, 2004

THE 2004 CAMPAIGN: Bush Sucks. There, We Said It.

McCARTHYISM

GOP Adviser Tied to Purple Dinosaur; Kerry Campaign Seeks Federal Probe

Continued From Page A1

that the Vietnam war retains its power to unsettle American politics by sharply dividing an entire, influential generation of children's television characters.

Neither party appears to have fully anticipated how central the issue would become to this year's election. And in private conversations, each candidate's top aides complain that media coverage of Mr. Dinosaur's attacks on Sen. Kerry have disrupted their plans and forced them to confront awkward and therefore unwelcome tactical questions.

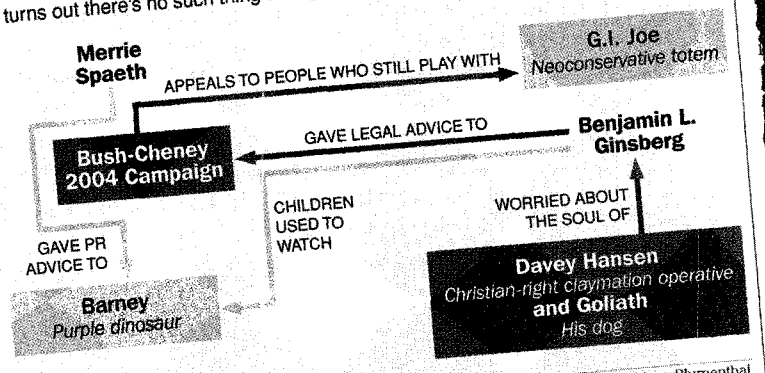
But evidence is mounting that the controversy has worked primarily to Sen. Kerry's disadvantage. So while no proof has yet emerged that either the president or his associates were directly involved in the organization or funding of Purple-Costumed Theropods for Truth, they might as well have been, experts say.

[For a discussion of the decision by this paper's editors to treat pretty much any assertion or denial by the Bush campaign as an outright lie, right from the git-go, see "Remind Me Why I'm Here?" by Daniel Okrent, page A26.]

According to the latest CBS/New York Times poll, 62 percent of copyrighted cel animation figures—along with 53 percent of live-action costume figures in [illegible] as "SpongeBob

The Connections

It turns out there's no such thing as a graphic too dumb for us to publish.



Source: Sidney Blumenthal

that, just the same, there are at least a few lavender-hued veterans of PBS preschooler programming who strongly object to the anti-Kerry theropod ads—and are bitter about the president's refusal specifically to condemn them.

Tinky Winky, for example, a local activist who is helping to organize Teletubbyland's transgendered toon community on Sen. Kerry's behalf, says s/he is "absolutely disgusted" by the Republican Party's tacit embrace of Mr. Dinosaur. He's a "closet case," Mr./Ms. Winky points out, and he has "no idea how to properly accessorize" either, the problem being that he was [illegible]

and a kiss from me to you," read a statement released by the president's spokesman, Scott McClellan. "Won't you say you love me too?"

A number of Mr. Bush's longtime allies are beginning to express public unease over the dinosaur matter. Davey Hansen, a religious conservative made of Play-Doh who is well known for his advocacy of niceness, says he has been reluctant to criticize the president, whose smooth gait and realistic flesh tone he admires. But Goliath, Mr. Hansen's philosophical talking dog, is not so diffident. "Oh, Davey," he [illegible]

the weekly Standard

SEPTEMBER 6, 2004

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Brown: A Great Decision—Except for Schools

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Oliver Brown—the plaintiff in the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision—sued a school board, not a public park commission, even though such facilities were also segregated. Within the private sector, discrimination was pervasive.

Yet, today, we see marked progress toward racial equality in parks, recreation programs, politics, communications, commerce, and industry—but not in schools.

The irony is all the greater, inasmuch as the Supreme Court, in *Brown,* outlawed only school segregation—on the shaky grounds that such segregation harmed the "hearts and minds" of African American children.

But at a time when the workplace is more often racially mixed than not, ***Brown*'s educational consequences remain ambivalent.** On the plus side, most school districts have become as integrated as city demographics allow. But the price paid for this integration has been high—involuntary busing that separated schools from families and communities; large, difficult-to-manage school campuses; white flight; and lowered expectations for students of all social backgrounds.

Worse, the performance of African American students has continued to trail that of whites. Although the gap narrowed in the 1980s, it opened again in the 1990s, a time when the principles of *Brown* should have been firmly entrenched.

Conventional liberals blame "politicians" for inadequate funding or "society" for its abiding, if now hidden, racism. But money has seldom bought educational progress, and one is hard put to explain the survival of racism in schools when it is on the wane elsewhere.

Conventional conservatives are more apt to "blame the victim," suggesting that the child-rearing practices of the African American family are the root cause. Yet the disparities in black and white achievement are smallest among preschoolers—the age at which family influences are pronounced and school influence nil.

Closer to the truth are those who blame Hollywood, television, and the fashion industry for fostering a drug-infested, antilearning, "hip-hop" youth culture that burgeoned in the 1990s. But if street culture is the problem, then assigned neighborhood schools are not the solution. Only in rare instances can traditional neighborhood schools suppress the seductions of their immediate environment.

Learning is better fostered when schools draw boundaries that separate classroom life from the street-culture opiates. Because good private schools have discovered this secret, African American students who attend them are much more likely than their public school peers to complete college.

Unfortunately, some still argue against school choice on the grounds that African American families are too ill-informed to pick good schools. But interest, knowledge, and commitment will come naturally to all parents, once choice is made available. To claim otherwise is racist in the extreme. **School choice is, indeed, the civil rights issue of our time.**

—Paul E. Peterson

Paul E. Peterson is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education. He is a professor at Harvard University.

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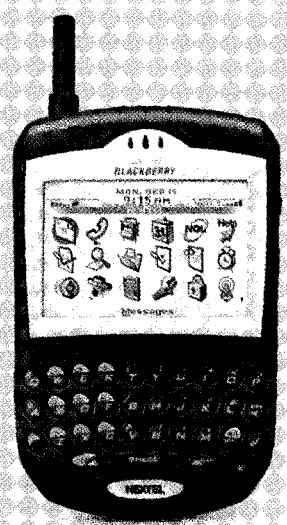

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